

Choosing Christ, Choosing His Family

Baptism at Stone Hill: A Guide for Parents

Preparing a child for baptism at Stone Hill is one of the most rewarding and joyful experiences of parenthood. This packet has been prepared to help parents explain God's plan of salvation to their child who has expressed an interest in baptism. It is essential for a child to understand what it means to offer a lifetime commitment to Jesus before making this most important decision.

When should a child be baptized?

We believe the Bible teaches that baptism is for those who have been taught the salvation message and have made an informed decision to become "disciples" or followers of Jesus Christ.

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:18-20)

How should my child be baptized?

The historic teaching and practice of Stone Hill Church has been and will continue to emphasize believer's baptism as it has in the past. At the same time, according to our by-laws and the previous practice of the church, the church has left the mode of baptism to the conscience of the individual. In view of this, we allow parents who so desire to have their infant children baptized by a willing pastor of the church at a special service of the church.

When should we expect this to happen?

There is no magic age that determines a child is mature enough to make a genuine decision to accept Christ. For many kids, the right time for baptism comes in their later elementary years. They reach a point in their lives when the truth of the gospel hits a spiritual nerve, and they

sense the need to be right with God. For many years they have known that Jesus died for their sins, but the truth finally becomes personal. They become aware of their own sin. For others, it may not come until middle school or even senior high. One thing we know for sure is that the overwhelming majority of those who accept Christ do so before the age of eighteen.

My young child is already asking about baptism. What should I do?

Often young children will bring up the issue of baptism. Since baptism is a visible “concrete” act they have seen others experience, it is easy for a child to want to “get baptized.” Often children begin asking about baptism just because they are seeking information or want to please adults, not because they are ready to make a decision.

The big decision is not “to be baptized,” but rather to “become a Christian.”

As a parent, you are in the best position to judge whether or not your child is truly ready for baptism. If your child seems only to be seeking information, explain baptism using simple concrete terms she can understand. If you feel the time is not right, affirm your child for having the desire to do the right thing and assure her that you will talk about it again when she is older.

How early should I begin to talk to my child about God’s plan of salvation?

It’s never too early to talk to our children about their relationship to Jesus Christ. The decision to trust Jesus as personal Lord and Savior and to obey him for a lifetime is the most important decision of life. When children inquire, we have an ideal opportunity to present the gospel simply and clearly. Some will be ready to respond. Others will need more time. Remember, we plant the seeds . . . God causes the growth. May God bless you and your child as you allow the Spirit to work in your child according to God’s timing.

If you feel your child is not ready to make a commitment, encourage them to wait. We dare not deny children the opportunity to respond to the Good News, nor do we need to push them too quickly. We simply must provide children a clear path to the Savior. As Jesus said: “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 19:14)

How do I determine if my child is ready?

Try to assess your child's readiness by evaluating them in these areas:

Knowledge: Does your child understand that they have sinned and that sin harms their relationship with God? Do they believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died on the cross to forgive sin? Do they understand what it means to trust God?

Emotions: Do those facts have an impact on your child? Is there a certain degree of sorrow over sin? Do they feel a need to be forgiven and become part of God's family?

Will: Do they indicate a change of heart or a spirit of repentance? Is he/she willing to demonstrate faith in Christ and allow Jesus to be their Lord or leader? Are they already making an effort to know God better?

Some suggestions for parents:

1. Do not try to cover this entire packet at one time. Children need time to absorb new concepts.
2. Have your child sit beside you at a table and minimize distractions. Your child will sit more attentively and be able to write when she is asked.
4. Help your child discover that the Bible speaks to kids by allowing them to read some of the Scripture verses.
5. Avoid using religious jargon that may confuse your child. Words like "redeemed" or "transgressions" are meaningless to most children. Even phrases like "asking Jesus into your heart" can be misleading unless carefully explained.
6. Allow your child to speak for themselves. If your child is ready to make a commitment to Christ, they ought to be able to express their faith on their own. Encourage them to pray to Jesus in their own words, asking for His forgiveness and help.
7. Do not pressure your child. Allow the truth of the Scriptures shared and the conviction of the Holy Spirit to bring the child to the point of decision.

Choosing Christ, Choosing His Family

Baptism at Stone Hill: A Workbook for Kids



“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God.” 1 John 1:12

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson One: What's the problem?

You have done something that keeps you from enjoying a special relationship with God. The Bible explains it this way: “but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.” (Isaiah 59:2)

The Muddy Girl



Once there was a little girl who disobeyed her parents and played in the mud. When she came home, she planned to march right into the house. But her father stopped her. He first took her to the side of the house and used a hose to wash off the mud. Then he brought her into his home.

Although God loves you, you cannot come into his family when you are dirty with sin.

God has given every person in this world the right to choose. You can choose to obey God and his ways, or you can choose to please yourself. Sin is choosing to go your own way instead of God's. Sin is putting what you want above what pleases God. Whenever you have chosen your own way over God's way, you have sinned.

Read this verse: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

How many people have sinned? _____

Since God is holy and perfect, he cannot stand sin. He cannot allow sin in his holy presence in heaven. Sin shuts us out of God's presence. Sin breaks up the relationship God desires to have with us. The price for choosing your own way over God's way is to be separated from God forever.

Read this verse: “None is righteous, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10)

Even though you try your best to do the right thing, are there ever times you fail to please God?
Are you a sinner?

Think about it...

Are you guilty of breaking God’s commands by sinning? Like...

lying
hating
cheating
stealing
fighting
being jealous
teasing
saying bad words
being disrespectful to your parents

Read the first part of Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death.”

What is the price for choosing your own way instead of God’s way?

If you are guilty of choosing your own way (sin) instead of God’s way, can you enter God’s presence in heaven?

You may try really hard to please God. You may do lots of nice things for people. You may even go to church every Sunday. But none of that can make up for the bad things you did, or the good things you chose not to do. With the price for your sin not paid, you cannot enter heaven and be with God.



Lesson Two: Who can fix this problem?

You can't—but God did. God loves you. He made a way to save you from the punishment you deserve because of your sin. He made a way for you to be with him forever. Jesus, God's Son, came to earth to take the punishment you deserve.

Read this verse and answer the questions: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Who is God's only Son? _____

Why did God send his Son? _____

How can you have eternal life? _____

Now read all of Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What free gift does God offer to us? _____

Picture it like this...



We are separated from God because of something we have done, but we are brought together with God because of something Jesus has done! Since eternal life is a gift, it cannot be earned. It can only be received. When you accept Jesus Christ and trust him as your Lord and Savior, you become part of God's family and receive eternal life.

Read this verse: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8)

Eternal life is a _____ from God.

Just knowing about God's plan isn't enough. You must do something about it. You must trust Jesus by stepping onto the bridge that he built. You must accept the gift that God purchased for us when he sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins by dying on the cross.

Read this Bible verse: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

What can you do to become a child of God? _____

You must believe Jesus took the punishment for your sins and accept him as your Lord and Savior to become a child of God.

Write your name in the blanks . . .

God loved _____ so much that he gave his one and only Son, that by believing in him, _____ will not die, but will live with God forever. By accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, _____ has the right to become a child of God.

Lesson Three: What can you do about your sin?

There is nothing you can do to make up for the bad things you have done. No matter how hard you try, you can't restore the broken relationship with God on your own. That's why we need Jesus as our Savior.

The Bible says: "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness..." (Titus 3:5a)

Do our good deeds fix our broken relationship with God? _____



The only thing you can do to become part of God's family is to believe Jesus!

Listen to God's promise: "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Romans 3:22) Circle the words that tell who is right with God.



To believe in Jesus means to trust Jesus by putting your life in his hands. Many people say they believe in Jesus. Their minds know facts about him. They may even say that Jesus died on the cross for the whole world. But knowing about Jesus is not the same as trusting Jesus with all your heart.

When you accept Jesus as your Savior, you must also

trust him as your Lord and obey his commands. You can trust God because he loves you more than anyone and will always ask you to do what is best for you.

Lesson Four: Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

1. Why do we need a Savior? Read Romans 3:23 and say it in your own words here.

2. Read Romans 6:23 and fill in the blanks. Because of your sin you deserve

_____ , but the free gift of God to you is _____

in _____ our _____ .

3. What has God done for us in Christ? Read Romans 5:8 and say it in your own words here.

4. What must we do to receive the gift of salvation? Read Romans 10:9-10 and fill in the blanks.

If you _____ with your mouth that Jesus is _____ and

_____ in your heart that God raised him from the _____ ,

you will be _____ . For with the heart one _____ and is

justified, and with the mouth one _____ and is _____ .

5. Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your only Lord and Savior? Write your answer here.

Lesson Five: What should you do now?

Be baptized! In the New Testament, baptism was the normal first step for a new Christian.



When Peter preached to people, this is what he said: “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.” (Acts 2:38)

Acts 8:12 gives us a pattern for baptism. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized.”

The New Testament teaches that those who have believed in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior should be baptized.

Jesus gave you the ultimate example. He went and was baptized by John. Baptism shows you are choosing to become obedient to Jesus and are serious about becoming a part of God’s family.

Jesus Is Baptized by John

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He came to John, wanting John to baptize him. But John tried to stop him. John said, “Why do you come to me to be baptized? I should be baptized by you!”

Jesus answered, “Let it be this way for now. We should do whatever God says is right.” Then John agreed.

So Jesus was baptized. As soon as he came up out of the water, the sky opened, and he saw God’s Spirit coming down on him like a dove. A voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the one I love. I am very pleased with him.”
Matthew 3:13-17 (ERV)



Lesson Six: What is baptism?

Baptism is a command, not a suggestion.

Jesus said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

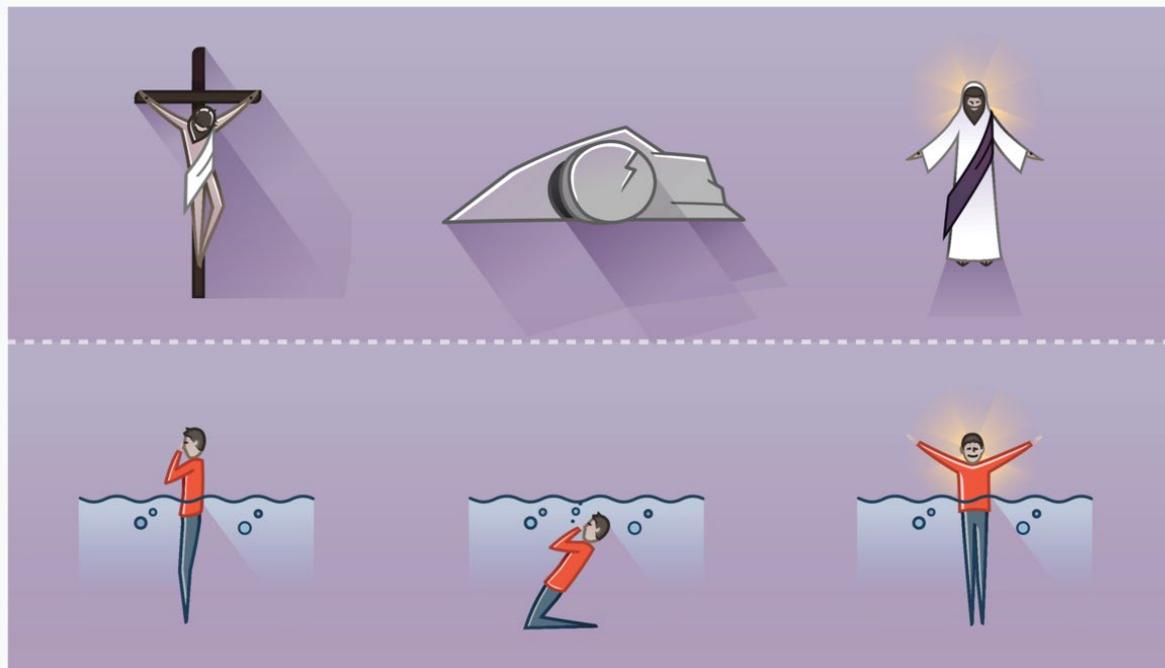
Baptism is “in the name of Jesus Christ”.

Read Acts 2:38. This expression means to submit yourself to and to give yourself over to Jesus as Lord. In baptism, the believer indicates that he or she is acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Savior and surrendering to Him.

Baptism is a picture of what God has done.

As you are lowered into the water you show that Jesus has washed away your sins. When you are brought up out of the water, you show that Jesus has made you clean and that you are a new person. You are born again! When you give your life to God, he washes you clean of sin and fills you with his Spirit, making you his child. You look the same on the outside, but you are new on the inside.

Read Romans 6:3-4. ”Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”



Lesson Seven: What does baptism mean?

Baptism shows that you believe that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.

1 Corinthians 8:6 says, “There is...one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

You may hear people at church say, “Christ is Lord” on a regular basis. But do you understand what these words mean?

First, the word Christ means “messiah” or savior. Jesus Christ is God in a human body. He came in human form, lived a sinless life, and allowed himself to be sacrificed to save us from sin and death (John 1:14,29; John 3:16; Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4-5).

Second, the word Lord means “ruler.” Christianity teaches that we have been purchased at the high price of Christ’s death on the cross. Our lives no longer belong to us, but to God. As the Bible explains, “for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20). So we proclaim “Christ is Lord” to acknowledge that we willingly submit to Jesus as the rightful ruler of our lives.

The Scriptures describe Jesus Christ as Lord over everything: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!” (Romans 11:36).

Baptism shows that you believe that you are part of God’s family, the church.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.”

The word body, in the verse, means the church. The church is the family of God. And that means other Christians become our brothers and sisters. When a person is baptized, she is telling others that she believes in Jesus Christ and that she is part of God’s family.



We read in Galatians 3:26-27 “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” A person becomes a member of God’s family by believing in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can be a member of God’s family.

As God's child, you are loved with the same love that God the Father has for his own Son, Jesus. Galatians 4:6 says "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" God has given us the "Spirit of his Son" so that we may share in the love he has for his Son.

How have you seen Christians acting like a loving family and caring for one another?

How can you love and care for your church, which is God's family?

What does it mean for you to be committed to your church?

Lesson Eight: What else does a Christian do?



Baptism is just the beginning of your new life in Christ!

Baptism marks a turning point in a person's life, a starting point of walking in faith in Christ and obedience to Him. Baptism does not save you. It does not change your heart toward God or your standing before God. But, baptism does show on the outside the truth of your inner faith in Christ.

Grow in your faith

God is pleased when you turn away from sin and follow his ways! The Bible calls this “repentance.” Repentance is making a “u-turn” with your life. Becoming a Christian is more than just you changing your mind though. Your old self dies and a new self is born. Because you become one with Christ by faith, his death is your death and his resurrection is your new life. Before you believed in Christ, you were against God and would never and could never live for him. Sin, selfishness and pride were your boss, telling you what to do. But now that you have died with Christ, sin and death are no longer your boss. They cannot tell you what to do anymore. Now you are alive in Christ! Now you are able to choose to follow God's ways and you want to do things that please him!

But isn't this hard to do sometimes? It would be, if you had to do it all by yourself. But as a member of God's family you are given a special helper—the Holy Spirit who lives in you to give you power to live for God. God then changes you from the inside out! The more you listen to the Holy Spirit, the more you will grow as a Christian to become more like Jesus. Just as a new baby grows up, so the Holy Spirit causes the one born again to grow up. This is called sanctification.

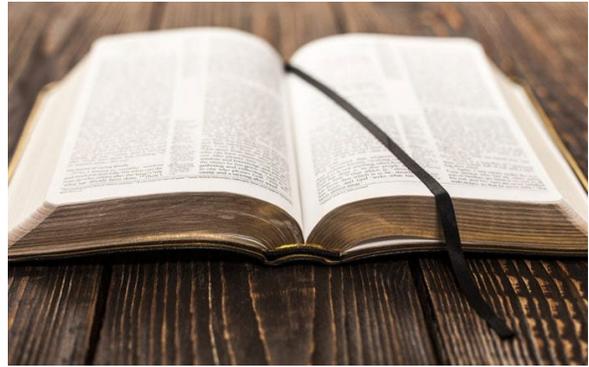
“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23a)



Listen and obey

Have you ever tried to build a model without reading the instructions? If you have, you probably messed it up. God knows we need his instructions to keep from messing up our lives. That's why he gave us the Bible.

Look at 2 Timothy 3:16 (ERV): "All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live."



God is not silent. He has shown us who he is in his Son, Jesus. The Bible is God's written words about Jesus. We can trust what the Bible says because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It has no mistakes and is perfect. The Bible tells us about who Jesus is, what he has done and how we should follow him. We live under its authority because it is God's word. And it's not just a word from long ago. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus speaks clearly to us today through the Bible. In the Bible we hear his voice.

God wants us to spend time with him every day, listening to him as we read the Bible. He wants us to choose to obey what he tells us to do in the Bible.

Pray

God saved you so that you can enjoy a relationship with him. You can hear his voice in the Bible and you can speak to him in prayer. In prayer you can praise him for his kindness and ask him for help. Prayer is not complicated. Jesus says that prayer is like a child talking to her father. All you need to do in order to pray is believe that God is your Father. The Holy Spirit gives you this belief. So, you can pray to God the Father, confident that he is powerful enough to help and loving enough to care. The Bible says: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6)

Attend church

Hebrews 10:25 says: “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.” God wants us to be with his family, the church, to worship him and encourage each other. The church is not just a meeting. It is a family, and so we share our lives together, look after one another and remind one another of Jesus.

God has given the church to help us. The church gathers to:

- Hear God’s word being taught
- Pray together for his help
- Remind one another of God’s goodness and glory

Share in the Communion Table



We also gather with God’s family to share in communion (also called The Lord’s Supper). During communion each participant eats a small piece of bread/cracker and drinks a small cup of grape juice, at the same time as everyone else. This eating and drinking is a small way of showing that the participant is sharing a “meal” with the other members of God’s family. This is a time when you should take a close look at your life and check for any sin that may keep you from being a healthy

part of Christ’s body, the church. During communion we also think about our relationships with others in God’s family, the church. We share the communion with Jesus himself and with all our brothers and sisters in the church. Communion is one of the ways that God strengthens our faith as we celebrate His death on our behalf.

Communion is...

Remembering the broken body of Christ who died in our place.

Remembering that Jesus drank the cup of God’s wrath in our place so that we could be forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Remembering that one day we will be with Christ, sharing in His future kingdom.

Lesson Nine: Ready or Not?

Now that you know what it means to be a part of God's family, there are a few very important questions for you to answer:



Are you willing to publicly confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord?

Are you ready to be baptized and live as a member of God's family?

Can you tell the story of how you became a Christian?

Can you explain about sin and salvation to others?

Have you decided to obey God's commands, with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Do you have any questions about baptism, the Bible, prayer or the church?

Lesson Ten: What are the next steps?

At Stone Hill Church we practice believer's baptism by immersion. Immersion means your whole body goes under the water for a moment. We baptize by immersion because this is how the New Testament describes how baptism was done in the early church (Acts 8:38).

At the same time, according to our by-laws and the previous practice of the church, the church has left the mode of baptism to the conscience of the individual. In view of this, we allow parents who so desire to have their infant children baptized by a willing pastor of the church at a special service of the church.

If you are ready to be baptized at Stone Hill, first complete this packet and talk it over with your parent(s) and/or another trusted adult in your life. Then, have your parent email members@stonehillprinceton.org to tell us that you are ready to be baptized at Stone Hill. We will contact your parent with details about what will happen next.

While you wait, you can be thinking about who you want to invite to your baptism. Is there anyone you could invite that doesn't normally come to your church?

You can also practice telling others the story of how you became a Christian and why you want to be baptized.

Appendix

Stone Hill Church's Mission Statement

Advancing God's kingdom of making dedicated followers of Jesus Christ in Princeton, the Northeast, and the whole world.

By God's grace, we will:

1. ...WORSHIP GOD with our whole hearts and our whole lives, being transformed daily more and more into the image of Christ.
2. ...SEEK TO KNOW, OBEY, AND SPEAK GOD'S WORD clearly, faithfully, and lovingly in an age marked by unbelief, confusion, and loss of conviction.
3. ...DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAY at all times, both individually and together.
4. ...LOVE ONE ANOTHER as Christ has loved us - serving, caring for, bearing with, forgiving, preferring, teaching, comforting, and encouraging one another - in authentic community.
5. ...ENGAGE THE WORLD AROUND US, proclaiming the gospel of Christ and seeking to overcome evil with good.

Stone Hill Church's Membership Statement

Being fully persuaded that God has directed me to unite in the fellowship of the Gospel with those of like precious faith in the Stone Hill Church, I do herewith affix my signature, indicating thereby that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, that I heartily endorse the Purpose, Doctrinal Statement, and By-Laws of the Stone Hill Church, and that I earnestly resolve with God's help to support the whole ministry of the Church, as it honors the Lord.

Name: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions, please contact members@stonehillprinceton.org or call the church office.