

Should My Child Take Communion?¹

When it comes to children, what is important and what must be determined by each parent for their own children is:

- Have they given a convincing profession of faith in Jesus?
- Are they showing fruit and evidence of conversion through obedience to and love for Jesus?
- Do they understand and can they articulate the significance of communion?

Don't Rush It

I would suggest to never rush communion. It's not magical so taking it sooner than later will not keep your kids from sin or earn them extra favor with God. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of remembrance and requires proper mental understanding and meaningful spiritual reflection to hold significance. Waiting and holding off for understanding, maturity, significance, anticipation and meaningful memories can be a good thing for your child. I know of families who make 13 the age for their believing children to take communion. This also allows it to become a rite of passage and marker for them on the road to adulthood.

When the Time is Right

When your wisdom and discernment from the Holy Spirit tells you that the time is right and your child is ready to participate in communion, I recommend setting up a conversation that covers the following topics:

- **What is Communion?**
Make sure they understand what communion is and what communion isn't. I recommend starting with Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22. Talk about what Jesus was teaching when He spoke to His disciples and how we continue to remember Jesus broken body and shed blood. Be sure to explain that what we are doing is symbolic and not literal. We are not literally drinking Jesus' blood and eating His body. Communion is not magical.
- **Why Do We Take Communion?**
Teach your child that we take communion because Jesus instructed us to and as a way of remembering and celebrating what He did for us. 1 Corinthians 11:26 tells us that as often as we eat of the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again.
- **How Do We Take Communion?**
Coach your child through the logistics and the spirit of taking communion. Communion is done differently at every church, so coach them on the proper way to receive and the proper time to partake of the bread and juice. Also, help and encourage them to be in the right mindset. 1 Corinthians 11 gives personal

¹ Children & Communion Resource from Village Church.

instructions for taking communion and tells a believer to “examine himself” before eating and drinking.

The decision for when your child begins to take communion is ultimately yours and yours alone. Be prayerful about it. No one knows your child better than you, and when it comes to a decision like this, trust the Lord’s guidance and your discernment as a parent.

You can do it; we can help!

Parent/ Child Dedication and Baptism

Should my Baby be Baptized or Dedicated?

Because the practices of infant baptism as well as child dedication have been significant throughout Church History and are found in the Scriptures, it is the tradition of the First Presbyterian Church to encourage parents to determine which practice they would like to participate in with their children. Hence, the FPC is willing to offer either infant baptisms or baby dedications.

What is the difference?

Q: Is baptism for adult believers only, or is it also for infants?

A: Well-meaning Christians disagree on this one, and it involves a little disagreement over what baptism signifies and represents.

Some churches practice what is called “Believers’ Baptism,” they dedicate babies, but will baptize people only when they are old enough to make a faith commitment. Their understanding is that Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision to follow Christ. At First Presbyterian Church we will baptize adults who become Christians, but we will also baptize infants. Children are a part of the household of God. Neither the baptism nor dedication of a child means that the child has a better shot at getting into heaven. Salvation rests in God’s grace and our decision to turn our lives over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in faith.

Child Dedication?

Child dedication is an act of giving back to God what He has so graciously given. Dedicating a child acknowledges God’s sovereignty, not only over the child, but also over the parents. In a sense, a dedication of a child is also a dedication of the parents to be godly role models.

Infant Baptism?

Infant baptism signifies God’s gracious love poured out upon us all, and is a witness to the covenant God makes with people of faith and their households. The baptism of an infant reminds us that God’s love reaches out to us even before we can respond ourselves.

The Essential Role of the Parent

During a baptism or dedication, parents stand before God and the church and make a vow ... a commitment.

In essence they are saying:

“God, this little child that I hold in my hands is not mine. I don’t own him or her. This child belongs to You, God. You’ve entrusted this child to us/me and I’ll do my best, or we’ll do our best, as parents with Your help to raise our child to put loving and following You before everything else in his or her life. And we will look to the time when they will make their own profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior.”

Parents are instructed to raise the child in the ways of God, not according to their own ways (see Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Some of these responsibilities include teaching and training the child in God's Word, demonstrating an example of godliness, disciplining according to God's ways and praying earnestly for and with your child.

Why Sunday Morning in the worship service?

We offer child dedication/ and infant baptism on Sunday mornings (Second Sunday in the month) to invite the church family to join in, not only as observers but as participants. The church body can give prayer support, assist in Bible teaching, and provide opportunities, facilities and workers through which you and your child can enter into the fullness of Christian faith.

As God's people, we also want to extend our faith in Jesus Christ to the next generation.

Kids are a big deal to Jesus!

If there are any doubts as to the “fitness” of infants to be raised as disciples, Jesus himself dispelled them. When children were brought to Jesus by their parents for his blessing, the disciples tried to brush them aside (Mark 10:13–16). But Jesus said, “Permit the children to come to Me ... for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” These children included babies (Luke 18:15); Jesus “took them in His arms and began blessing them” (Mark 10:16).

The Scriptural Basis for Dedicating Children

The practice of child dedication has been modeled throughout the Bible:

- *The Israelites brought their infant children to the priest for blessing (Leviticus 12:1-7).*
- *Hannah brought her long-awaited son Samuel to the priest Eli to dedicate him to the Lord (I Samuel 1:24-28).*
- *Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple for his dedication as required by the Law of Moses (Luke 2:22).*
- *Jesus said: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."(Mark 10:14).*

Additional Scriptures addressing parenting include Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 127:3-5 and Ephesians 6:1-4.

The Scriptural Basis for Infant Baptism

Infant baptism is founded in the understanding that the church consists of those who have received the promise of spiritual blessing that was originally given to Abraham.

The third chapter of Galatians spells this out carefully, concluding, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Several places in the New Testament whole families came to faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized. The most detailed and informative account is that of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30–34). "Believe in the Lord Jesus," he was told, "and you shall be saved, you and your household" (vs. 31; cf. 11:14). Accordingly, the gospel was preached "to him together with all who were in his house" (vs. 32). In response, he "believed in God with his whole household" (vs. 34), whereupon "he was baptized, he and all his household" (vs. 33).

When Luke says that the jailer heard the gospel and believed with his household, the implication is that everyone in his household went along with him. In the household baptism passages, the head of the house always believes "with" his household, but he and they are baptized. Just as the heads of households escorted Paul to the harbor "with" infants who were only passive participants, so also heads of households were baptized "with" whatever infants were in their families.

Additional Scriptures addressing house hold baptisms include:

Acts 10:22; 11:12, 14; Acts 18:1, 4-8; 1 Corinthians 1:14-16; Acts 16:13-15.)

Parental and Congregational Covenants

During the dedication or baptism, we will be asking parents to make a public commitment by responding "We do" to statements of dedication such as:

- 1. Do you affirm your own faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?*
- 2. Do you this day acknowledge this child as the gift of God and publicly thank Him for this blessing?*
- 3. Do you claim God's covenant promises on your child's behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for his or her salvation, as you do for your own?*
- 4. Do you promise, in humble reliance upon God's grace, to set before your child an example of the new life in Christ, by obeying His word and showing His love?*
- 5. Do you promise to pray with and for your child, and bring him; or her up in the knowledge and love of God?*

*The congregation is also asked to respond to a statement of commitment similar to:
Do you promise to accept the responsibility of praying for these children, supporting and encouraging them and their parents, so that in due time they may confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?*

A prayer of dedication concludes the ceremony.

Is Dedication the same as Infant Baptism?

Child dedication is different from infant baptism. In each we are trusting that God will provide salvation for the child.

A child dedication allows for the child to make their own profession of faith before baptism. Their baptism will be a public statement of faith after they have believed in Christ.

In Infant baptism, parents state their faith in God's covenantal nature, looking for the time when their child will profess their own faith in Christ.

Are Children Saved by Being Dedicated or Baptized?

Q: Is baptism/ dedication a guarantee of getting into Heaven when I die?

A: No. The offer of forgiveness and new life in this world and forever in the next is given only by the grace of God, only through what Jesus did for us on the cross. We receive it by trusting Him. We believe the Bible teaches that salvation comes to us through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (John 14:6) so salvation is not passed on to a child through baptism or dedication.

However, children in homes where at least one parent is a Christian enjoy the special privilege of being 'set apart' to the influence of the Gospel and godly parenting (1 Corinthians 7:14).

A Child Dedication or Baptismal ceremony provides a public opportunity for a parent or parents to commit to provide that influence so that one day their child will make a decision to trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. And it calls the church community to join the parents in raising their child to know Jesus Christ and His great love for them.

Do Parents need to be Members of First Presbyterian Church

Parents do need to be members of tFirst Presbyterian Church to participate in child dedication or have their baby baptized. Sometimes, people may not understand why this is. They think of Baptism and or dedication as a service that ought to be provided to anybody who wants it. But this is not just a ceremony that you go through. This is a vow before God between both the parents and the church community. A parent cannot make that vow unless he or she is willing to say, "God, I know I can't give to my child what I myself don't have. So I want to follow you. I want to be part of your community so I can give that faith to my child and pass it on."

We have learned that it does not take a village to raise a child, it takes a church, and our commitment to be God's community together is essential for all of us, and our families.

