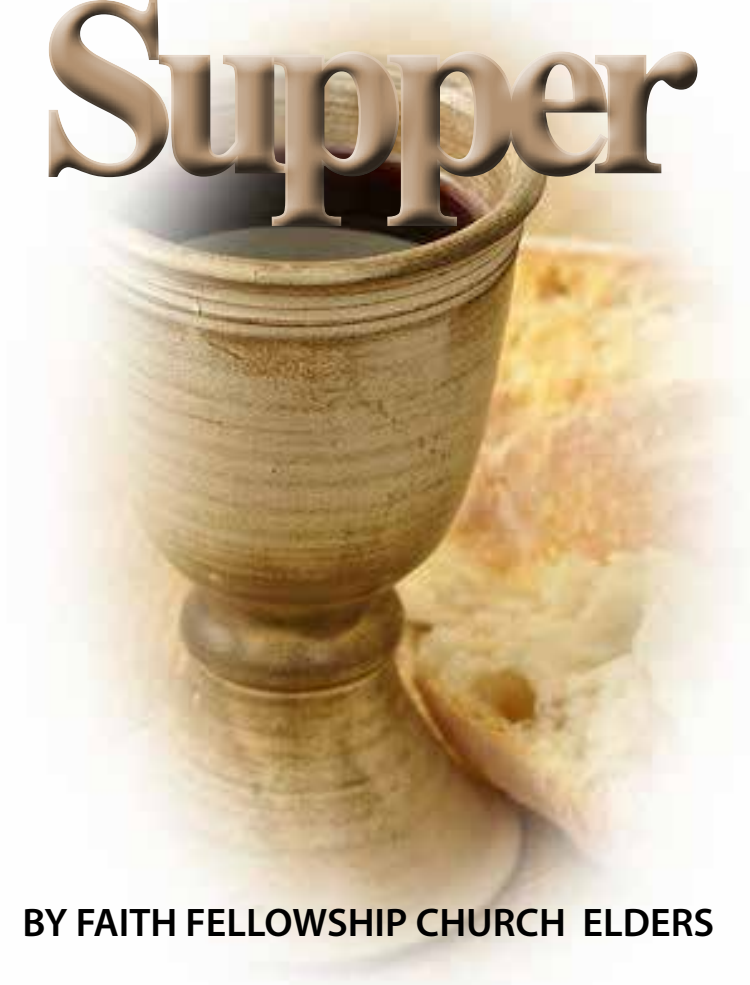


GOD'S ANSWERS TO EVERYMAN'S QUESTIONS

# Baptism and The Lord's Supper



BY FAITH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH ELDERS

# **God's Answers For Everyman's Questions**

The heart of the righteous studies how to  
answer, but the mouth of the wicked  
pours forth evil.  
Proverbs 15:28 (NKJV)

Personal "bent" / Prejudice –  
Affirming what I "already believe..."

Let us not affirm ourselves! In this series  
we have sought to study and reveal God's  
answers to often-asked questions.

The Elders of Faith Fellowship Church

@Faith Fellowship Church, Clarence NY, 2014

# Baptism and The Lord's Supper

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# 1. Sacraments



**H**ere at Faith Fellowship Church, we seek to glorify our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in everything that we do. Our theme verse for 2010 was Hebrews 10:24&25, which says,

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (NKJV)*

As elders charged with the responsibility of overseeing the spiritual matters at FFC, we find it imperative that we as a local church body get to know one another by building relationships with the goal of being able to motivate, encourage and admonish each other to walk in obedience to Jesus Christ (Romans 15:14). This takes place as we make ourselves available to serve each other both within and without the four walls of the church building (Galatians 6:9&10).

This “getting to know one another” also takes place as we corporately sit under the teaching of the Word of God (Acts 2:42). The Bible is the most important thing that we can talk about and learn from, for it changes the way we think (Ephesians 4:23), guides us in making God-honoring decisions (Psalm 119:9, 105), shows us how we are to grow in godliness (2 Peter 1:2-8), teaches us God’s divine standard (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans

13:9&10), and gives us insight into how we as Christians can be working to make things better for the glory of God (2 Timothy 3:16&17). God's Word makes it pretty clear that our own natural thinking is sinfully off-base (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10; 8:7), which is why we need what God says in His Word to replace our opinions (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

This booklet will take a brief but thorough look at a way in which we as elders can help build up and strengthen the church to grow in maturity. One of the ways in which we as elders are desiring to raise the bar with regards to church polity (how we conduct as the local body here at FFC) is in regards to the sacraments of baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the Lord's Supper ("communion" – 1 Corinthians 11:23).

## **What is a sacrament?**

A sacrament is a blessing from Christ which is a sign (a picture) and a seal (a mark of being set apart) given to believers in order to teach and assure us of our salvation. Far from being two old-fashioned, dusty and sterile practices of the church, they are in fact celebrations of our death to sin (Romans 6:2&3), our resurrection to new life in Christ (Romans 6:4), and our future fellowship with Jesus Christ when He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26), and thus should be observed with joyful hearts in praise & thanksgiving to God. We believe the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are commands clearly given to us in Scripture. It is important to note, however, that participation in these two sacraments does not bring salvation; we understand the Bible to clearly teach that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8&9; Acts 4:12; Galatians 2:16; Hebrews 11:6).

# 2. Baptism



## What is baptism?

First, we will briefly discuss the sacrament of baptism. As mentioned before, it is a picture of our death to sin and our new life in Christ. John Calvin once said, “Baptism is the sign of the initiation by which we are received into the society of the church.” Throughout the Book of Acts, we see several examples of people who trusted in Christ to save them from their sin, and then immediately were baptized (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:44-48; 16:30-33). Moments before He ascended to heaven, Jesus Christ commanded His apostles- and ultimately us as a church- to carry out baptism as an inseparable part of evangelism (sharing the Good News of salvation) (Matthew 28:19). The local church obeyed (Acts 2:41), and to this day we continue to practice it in obedience to our Lord. Baptism displays a person’s commitment to Christ, which, as evidenced from Scripture, is a commitment that will be lived out in the local church.

## Who can get baptized?

Baptism can only be glorifying to God if it is in harmony with His Word. Since God’s Word makes it clear that those walking by faith are Christ’s (John 10:27; 17:20-23; Romans 8:8; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 19; Ephesians 2:13; 4:4-6), an outward sign of baptism is permissible only for those who can clearly & biblically profess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In addition to this, Christ told us to watch the fruit of people’s lives (Matthew 7:15-20). It is conceivable that there are people who have been baptized that are not truly saved, but our job as a church is not to go about trying to weed out false disciples- this is God’s responsibility (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

## What constitutes a biblical profession of faith?

Wouldn't you agree that it makes sense for a person who has been saved to then be able to explain that experience to another person? While a new convert won't necessarily be able to dive into deep doctrinal & theological truth (Hebrews 5:13), anyone professing Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior should be able to:

- communicate the content of the gospel (the "good news" of salvation through Jesus Christ alone- death on the cross for our sins, resurrection from the dead, full forgiveness to anyone who puts their trust in Him, and a new life of obedient submission to His lordship) (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; Luke 9:23)
- give an expression of faith in Him (i.e. "I am relying on Jesus Christ alone to save me from my sin") (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9&10)
- evidence godly sorrow over sin, followed by repentance which leads to the fruit of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 7:10&11; Galatians 5:22&23)
- have the ability to examine himself and the condition of his soul (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
- have demonstrated a willingness to turn away from the world and live a life keeping God's commands and loving God's church (1 John 2:15-17; 5:1-5)
- exhibit fruit which proceeds from regeneration (Galatians 5:22&23)

While the above is not an exhaustive list in and of itself, it does serve as a good gauge to evaluate a person and see where they're at, especially in this process leading to baptism.

## So, what about baptism?

We said earlier that we as elders are seeking to raise the bar here at FFC. Our goal is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching, training and overseeing the body in any and all spiritual matters, particularly concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper. One of our greatest desires is to be able



to stand before the Lord someday and give a joyful account of those individuals which we have had oversight of (Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 13:17). To be able to do so means that we do what we, through the power & leading of the Holy Spirit, deem best and most loving for the protection the flock.

We as a Board of Elders have spent much time praying, deliberating, searching the Word of God, and consulting other biblical churches as to what protocol concerning baptism would be wisest. What we have decided from this point in time is that individuals will be baptized upon entering the local body here at FFC as Junior Committed Broken Servants (Jr. CBS'ers), which is at the age of twelve. We are hopeful that evidence of salvation can be seen in the life of a child as they grow & mature physically & spiritually, and we trust that the age of twelve will provide a suitable timeframe in which to make such an evaluation. This practice will also give further affirmation to becoming a Jr. CBS'er, and will help reinforce the truth that baptism and joining a local church are a commitment that must be taken seriously.

## **But what about young children? Does God save them, too?**

Absolutely! The faith of children is an example used by our Lord Himself to help people see just how small our faith must be when it is placed in an incredibly awesome God (Matthew 11:25; 18:3). Just as a child is utterly dependent upon their parents, so are believers utterly dependent upon Christ. God saves those who recognize their total inability to do anything apart from Him (John 15:1-6).

Any of us as parents who are walking in the Spirit would readily confess that we see our children as maybe a slight cut above the rest, a bit more intelligent than most, or just plain "gifted." When we're totally honest before God, we must acknowledge that children are intellectually immature, prone to frequently changing their minds, easy to influence, and- for many- very limited in their exposure to worldly things. Therefore, it is very difficult to discern with certainty whether or not a child is truly converted. The younger a child is, the more difficult this becomes. Sometimes well-meaning parents, in concern for the spiritual state of their child, coerce them into "saying the sinner's prayer," raising their hand to indicate salvation in a group setting, or walking down the aisle & coming forward during an invitation. Besides the fact that such practices are not found anywhere in the Bible, these things show all the more that children can

be easily influenced to do & say things that they don't understand. In this same way, the sacrament of baptism can be pursued by a child who really doesn't fully understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, or what ramifications will result from it.

## **What should we as parents do?**

In regards to explaining salvation to children, it is vitally important not to oversimplify the truth of the gospel. Deuteronomy 6:6&7 emphasizes the importance of thoroughness and constant teaching & explanation when it comes to working with children. It is the truth- found in God's Word- that saves, but that truth must be understood.

Instead, the parents (particularly the fathers) should faithfully, patiently, and thoroughly teach them the gospel. John 3:8 reminds us all that it is God the Holy Spirit Who moves in the lives of people to reveal to them their need of salvation, and John 16:8-11 affirms the Holy Spirit's role in producing this conviction. Further, the parents should work closely with the elders here at FFC in evaluating the spiritual state of their child, for it is the elders who are primarily responsible for administering the sacraments within the local church and for caring for the souls of those who receive them (Hebrews 13:17). In the case of a child slightly younger than twelve years of age who approaches an elder and clearly presents their case of being genuinely saved & desiring to be baptized, we as elders would proceed with special attention and baptize them.

## **Isn't it unhealthy to wait too long to baptize a child who's really saved?**

While it may seem at first that there will be problems with waiting too long to baptize a truly converted child, the real danger lies in the possibility of giving false assurance to a child who is not truly regenerate (born again). Pastor Dennis Gundersen of Grace Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma offers good advice when he says to inquiring parents, "Your child will not be any less saved by your judicious waiting for more substantial evidences, if God has indeed performed a work of grace in the first place." Such a statement must be seen for what it is: loving protection! What we as elders so desperately want is for children to grow up to make a conscious decision to follow Christ on their own, and one of the ways in which this outcome can be aided is by removing any and all possibilities for them to be mistaken as to the validity of their relationship with Christ.

Another helpful quote is found in a treatise on baptism written by Grace

Community Church in southern California:

“Rather than rushing [a child] into baptism after an initial profession, then, it is wiser to take the ongoing opportunity to interact with them and wait for more significant evidence of lasting commitment. Even if a child can say enough in a testimony to make it reasonably clear that they understand and embrace the gospel, baptism should wait until they manifest evidence of regeneration that is independent of parental control.”

## **What should I say to a child who thinks they are ready for baptism if I’m not sure they are?**

Encouragement and enthusiasm are really important to have when speaking with such a child. Parents and elders alike would both be wise to act upon any such verbal indication from children with positive words, even though the professing child may not be evidencing fruit of salvation. In such a situation, we as elders would advise saying something along these lines:

“I’m thrilled that you are repenting and trusting in Christ. More than anything we want to know that God has really changed your life. The way we will know is if you continue repenting and trusting and if you act like a true Christian- that is, you have a new heart that loves to obey God. *Sometimes we do not know that until we are in a place where it really costs us to be a Christian. Maybe you will not know it until you face the choice between your friends and Christ.* Let’s see what God does. We’ll watch and pray about it. As questions come up, we’ll talk.” *(emphasis added)*

Direct your attention to the italicized portion of this statement. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, we see repeated instances where He put the ball in people’s courts to decide between Him or \_\_\_\_\_. Matthew 4:17, 6:19-24, 7:24-27, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 14:25-35, and John 3:18-21 all provide excellent examples of such teaching. This clearly shows us the importance of watching a child’s decision making as they grow and mature because this will be the clearest indication of whether or not they truly are God’s. When there is a price to be paid and a sacrifice to be made, which will they choose: God or man? This is why we cannot say with enough emphasis how important this time of observation & discernment is for parents and elders in the life of a child, and this can only be seen over an extended period of time.



# 3. The Lord's Supper



## What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper (referred to as "communion" from this point) is a sacrament which uniquely depicts continuing fellowship with Christ (Acts 2:42 – "fellowship" seen through partaking in "breaking of bread," or communion). This is a time of remembering Jesus Christ and the breaking of His body & the shedding of His blood for our sin on the cross ("my body which is given for you...my blood which is shed for you," Luke 22:19&20). It is also a celebratory time of hopeful anticipation for when Christ returns to reign bodily here on the Earth during the Millennial Kingdom, the kingdom in which we as His Church will reign with Him ("until the day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God," Mark 14:25; Daniel 7:22; Revelation 2:26; 3:21). Further, it is a practice given to the church to observe (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and by partaking in it, believers renew their commitment to participating in the church and ultimately the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27-34). It is a practice of unity with Christ and His Church, and when believers partake in it together, they are actually reaffirming their unity found in the cross of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16&17).

To help clarify it a little further, baptism and communion can be distinguished by observing the key difference between them, as noted by Wayne Grudem:

"Baptism [is] an ordinance that is only observed once by each

person, as a sign of the beginning of his or her Christian life...The Lord's Supper [is] an ordinance that is to be observed repeatedly throughout our Christian lives, as a sign of continuing fellowship with Christ."

The bottom line is, if I partake in communion, it means I must be in good standing with my local church and participating in the fellowship of ministerial serving within it.

## **Who can participate in communion?**

In the same way that baptism is permissible only for true followers of Jesus Christ, communion is a privilege that is reserved for believers in Jesus Christ who have followed the Lord in baptism (Acts 2:41&42 – note the progression of salvation first, baptism second, and communion third), are living a life of obedient submission to Jesus Christ (John 8:31), and are walking in God's forgiveness through the confession of their sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

## **What about children? When can they start participating in communion?**

In the same way that baptism is permissible only for those who can biblically profess faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and who are walking in obedience to His Lordship in their lives, so communion is permissible for children who have first followed this first step of salvation, and then have been baptized. Again, we would submit the biblical example found in Acts 2:41&42 as the proper order of events: salvation, baptism, and communion.

The simple reasoning behind having a child wait until they are baptized before participating in communion is threefold: first, communion before baptism confuses the order of the sacraments by placing the rite of initiation (baptism) *after* the rite of ongoing participation (communion). Second, it obscures the purpose of the sacraments (the sacraments being a means of teaching and assuring believers of their salvation) by admitting a child to one while withholding the other. Third, it offers false assurance to the child, much like baptizing a child that is young and not fully aware of what they are doing. This potentially creates a dangerous stumbling block to the repentance and faith they must demonstrate in order to be saved. Our concern as elders is that we don't put the cart before the horse, so to speak, and be held responsible for leading children astray in this area (Matthew 18:6&7).

## **What if my child isn't baptized, but is taking part in communion? How do I handle this?**

If your child is taking communion without having been previously baptized, then you actually have a great opportunity for humble parental leadership. We as elders would counsel you to first study the Word of God and see what it teaches about baptism and communion (2 Timothy 2:15). As with all of us, such study allows the Holy Spirit to reveal to us where we can fall in line with God and His Word (1 Corinthians 2:12). Then, you must humble yourself before your child, and take responsibility for any confusion or difficulties this has caused them (James 5:16). Next, lead your child through a process of understanding the nature of conversion (answer the question, "What does God's Word teach about what it means to be born again [saved]?"), which can finally transition into teaching about the practices of the sacraments of baptism and communion (Deuteronomy 6:6&7).

We as elders will wholeheartedly work with you in encouraging & supporting you, and giving you biblical counsel as you work with your child in this process. This is another reason for the local church, which is a living organism where we can encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24&25).





# 4. Conclusion



**W**e trust that this brief treatment of baptism and communion has been helpful to you, whether you are a parent or not. God's Word is very clear (Hebrews 4:12), and we need to make sure that we are following it diligently. While our decision to baptize children at the age of twelve is nowhere found in Scripture- we would not dare to say such a thing is- it is, however, the result of much study, prayer, deliberation, and godly counsel. Our desire is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and this area of the sacraments is one way in which we can be raising the bar and helping the body here at FFC follow the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:12&13:

*“For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a mature man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:”*

May the grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be upon you!

## FURTHER STUDY

Here are some other resources that we would encourage you to check out. In particular, the first two articles have been extremely helpful to us as elders.

- “The Sacraments – Questions and Answers for Parents” by Mark Mullery, [www.covlife.org/pdf/Sacraments.Questions-and-Answers-for-Parents\\_.pdf](http://www.covlife.org/pdf/Sacraments.Questions-and-Answers-for-Parents_.pdf)

- “Evangelizing Children,” [www.gracechurch.org/distinctives/evangelizing\\_children/](http://www.gracechurch.org/distinctives/evangelizing_children/) (\*You can click on the PDF Download icon in the top right corner of the page for a more readable document)

- Dennis Gundersen, *Your Child’s Profession of Faith*. Amityville, NY. Calvary Press, 1994

- “Childhood Conversion” by Jim Elliff, [www.ccwonline/cconv.html](http://www.ccwonline/cconv.html) (\*Paste this link into the Google search bar, and a link to the correct page will come up)

- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*. Leicester, England, InterVarsity Press, 1994. (On baptism and the Lord’s Supper.)

- “Why Can’t I Have a Snack Like Everyone Else?” by David Michael, [www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/resources/why-cant-i-have-a-snack-like-everyone-else](http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/resources/why-cant-i-have-a-snack-like-everyone-else)

- Donald Whitney, *How Can I Be Sure I’m a Christian?* Colorado Springs, NavPress, 1994

- John T. McNeill, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, Chapters 14, 15, & 17. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 196



