



# **Understanding the Gospel**

A parents handbook for when your child is considering becoming a communing member or making a public confession of faith.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might and the wonders that he has done.”

Psalm 78:1-4

“Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.’ And he laid his hands on them and went away.”

Matthew 19:13-15

A child or youth being ready to profess their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to be a communing member of the church is truly a thing to be celebrated. It is a sign of God's great work and faithfulness among us and should draw us to thanks and praise.

Don't miss the weight of glory in this moment. "It is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)." It shows "the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7)."

Your child could be ready now and working through this book will confirm what God has done, or in working through this book together you could see God at work to bring them to a place of faith. This book could also show you areas where your child has doubt. That is a very normal experience for children, both developmentally and spiritually, and a safe place where they can talk about those doubts is a good thing. God is certainly big enough and steady enough to handle all of our questions and uncertainties, when we are young and when we are old. The encouragement we can give our children is that we trust God ultimately with them and with their salvation, and we are trusting that God will meet them in those doubts. Voicing them and discussing any doubts without any guilt or shame put upon them can be an important step in their journey of faith.

Take a moment to prayerfully consider where your child or youth is now. Journal some thoughts or prayers for them.

There will be seven lessons to work through with your child at your own pace.

Lesson 1: God is Great and to be Praised

Lesson 2: In the Beginning

Lesson 3: We all Have a Sin Problem

Lesson 4: God Has a Solution for the Sin Problem and We Respond in Faith

Lesson 5: We Grow in Christ Once We are Saved

Lesson 6: Next Steps

Lesson 7: An Invitation to the Lord's Supper

The gospel is something your child will learn and grow in for their lifetime. There is no formula or having the exact right words for talking about our great God and the gospel with your child. It will be a thousand conversations and church experiences, not one, that fill in your child's view of God and the gospel. We say that to give you freedom that you don't have to say everything in one conversation or with just the right words. We do hope and pray this book will be a good help and guide for meaningful conversation with your child. Take a moment to prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to be with you and your child as you work through this book and to help you to have the words to share. Journal any thoughts or prayers (the rest of the journal spaces in the book are for your child to journal).

## **Lesson 1: God is Great and to be Praised**

Verses to Consider: Col 1:17, Ps 147:5, Mal 3:6, Rom 8, Ps 33:6, Is 46:9, 1 Jn 4:8

God has always existed. He was not created but He did make everything that was created, including you.

There is only one God, the living and true God. The one God is made up of three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (One way to think about this is to look at your hand. Your hand is just one hand that has five fingers. So, it is one made up of five. God is one, made up of three.)

We can worship God for who He is including:

- God is all powerful, He has no physical limits.
- God can be everywhere and anywhere at all times.
- God knows all things including the past, the present, the future, the number of hairs on your head, and the things you dream about.
- God is holy. He always does right and is forever perfect.
- God has a steadfast love for His children, it will not go away. He is faithful.
- God is good and works good for His children.
- God is merciful, compassionate, and kind ready to forgive all sins through Jesus.

Since God is one and God is three, let's look at some ways we can worship God as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. They each have their role or part to play and it is not the same part.

- God the Father loves you so much that He planned salvation and sent Jesus and the Spirit.
- God the Son loves you so much that He came and died for you.
- God the Spirit loves you so much that He is always with you to help you.

Understanding and knowing God is not always easy because He is so much bigger and more than we can even imagine, and yet He has told us so much about Himself in His Bible that we can, for our entire lifetime, keep learning more and more about Him.

Having faith is not knowing everything, and knowing everything is not faith. You have a whole lifetime to learn more about our Great God.

Questions to Discuss:

- 1) What about who God is makes you thankful?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What is something you have learned about God recently?

Have a time of prayer together thanking God for who He is.

Thank you, God, that you are (choose a few or add your own):

The Creator  
Loving  
Perfect  
True

One God  
Forgiving  
Praiseworthy  
Good

Kind  
Powerful  
Three Persons  
Faithful

Thank you, Father, for making a plan to save me.

Thank you, Jesus, for coming and dying for me.

Thank you, Spirit, for helping me believe.

Journal some thoughts or prayers you have.

## **Lesson 2: In the Beginning**

Verses to consider: Gen 1, Eccl 7:29, Jn 1

Now that we know a little about God we can talk about us and how we got here. There was a time when there was no earth and no humans. The Bible says there was darkness. Then God spoke... all He had to do was speak, and He created.

The book of Genesis tells us that God made light first. There was darkness. Then God spoke saying "let there be light," and there was light. God went on to make our entire earth. He made man and woman, and everything was perfect.

The word perfect is kind of hard to even imagine because the world we live in is not perfect. The people we know are not perfect, and we ourselves are not perfect. But, when the Father with Jesus and the Holy Spirit first made the world, and Adam and Eve, everything was as it be. God made everything, and then He called it "VERY GOOD."

We can also start at the very beginning of each of our own lives. The Bible tells us that God created each one of us in our mother's belly. So, He made the earth, He made the first humans, and He made you.

The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit created everything, and it was good. This perfect world flowed from God's love. As the creator, God is the ruler over the earth and over people. As our creator, He is the ruler over us. He created us to find our life and joy in Him and to trust and obey Him.

"For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16-17)."

Questions to Discuss:

- 1) Who are you really thankful God made?
  
- 2) Can you think of anything just God might know about you? (some examples: your dreams at night, good and bad thoughts you don't share with others, what you'll be when you grow up) He knows everything about you and loves you.

Have a time of prayer together thanking Him as the Creator.

Thank you, God, that:

You made this world.  
You made me.  
You made the people I love.  
You hold the world together.  
You are a good ruler.

Journal some thoughts or prayers you have.

### **Lesson 3: We all have a sin problem**

Verses to Consider: Gen 3, Acts 17:24, Rom 3, Rom 5:12, Rom 6:23, Eph 2:1

In the beginning God created everything, and it was good and perfect. Sadly, things went wrong. Adam and Eve, the first humans, even though their world was perfect chose to disobey God. This is called sin. And once sin was in the world, it was here for us all. Each and every one are born sinners and so we all sin.

What is sin? Sin is the bad things we do, the bad things we say, and the bad things we think. And no one had to teach us to do and say and think these bad things – when I was little no one had to teach me to hit my brother or throw a tantrum or to whine. I just did it all on my own – it came naturally to me because I was born with a sin problem. And so was everyone you know and so were you.

Just a few examples of sin would be hitting someone when playing, lying to your parents that you had brushed your teeth, thinking when someone else gets a birthday gift that I should have been the one to get that gift, rolling your eyes at your mom.

These sins might seem like small things, but when you step back and look at the big picture, you can see they show that in the things we do, in the things we say, and in the things we think **WE ARE NOT LIKE GOD**. We do not choose the way our Creator would have us to live. God never does bad things, He never says bad things, and He never thinks bad things.

God is holy – He is perfect. And our sins don't just affect us – they hurt other people and they hurt the world around us. God hates this – He hates when people hurt themselves, others and our world. He hates when other people hurt us. He hates sin. When we sin, we are sinning against God Himself. And like an earthly judge who is right to make a person who commits a crime go to jail, God tells us that because we do not do things like Him, and we do not say things like Him, and we do not think things like Him, this leads to us not being able to be with Him.

The Bible describes this as us being dead in our sins. Our sin brings death to us. God's way of doing things brings eternal life, but our own way – our sin way – brings death to us. Because of our sin we are separated from God. We need to be rescued. We need eternal life, but we have sinned and even if we are really, really good, we can't be perfect and holy. There is nothing we can do by ourselves to get eternal life.

This is a really sad and really big problem. Do you think God might have a solution? Thank goodness He does! Our next lesson will talk about the solution, but for today, spend some time talking and thinking and praying about your sin problem.

Questions to Discuss:

- 1) What is something bad you have done? Said? Thought?
  
- 2) Does God sin like we do?
  
- 3) Since we sin and are not like God in what we do, what we say, and what we think, do you think this is a big problem or a small problem?
  
- 4) Do you think, knowing all you know about God, that He has a solution for our sin problem?

Have a time of prayer together thanking God that:

He made a plan to rescue us from our sin problem.

He doesn't leave us alone in our sin problem.

We can be honest with God about all the bad things we do, say and think. We don't have to hide. He already knows.

Journal some thoughts or prayers you have.

## **Lesson 4: God Has a Solution for the Sin Problem and We Respond in Faith**

Verses to Consider: Eph 2:1 & 8. Rom 5 & 6, 2 Thess 1:8-9

The solution to the sin problem began before the world was even made when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit planned that after man sinned and set everyone on a path of death, Jesus would become a human and would be the Savior of the world. God planned and accomplished salvation for sinners in His sovereign mercy, meaning we did not deserve His salvation, yet He's given us what we don't deserve.

Jesus came down from heaven to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. He was already God, but then He became man too being born in a manger. So, Jesus is the God-man who lived a perfect life of obedience and love for sinners.

Jesus died on the cross and then was resurrected from the dead to save everyone who believes in Him. He did this because He loved us, and He wanted us to be with Him for all eternity.

Acts 10:43 tells us, "everyone who believes in Jesus may receive forgiveness of sins through his name." We can't earn being saved by being good or by doing lots of good things. We can only be saved because of Jesus. We can only be saved if we trust in Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection for our forgiveness and acceptance in God's sight.

Trusting Christ and responding to Him in faith is a wonderful thing that God by His Spirit helps us to do. In faith we can say:

- I believe that I am sinful, and I am sorry for my sin.
- I understand that I need Jesus' death to take the punishment for my sins.
- I trust in Jesus alone to save me, forgive me, and give me a joyful relationship with God.
- I ask Jesus to send His Holy Spirit into my heart and fill my heart with love and trust for God.
- I look to Jesus to help me serve and obey him.

If you want to be saved and be with God forever, what do you do? You respond to God in faith trusting Jesus to save you. God loves to give the gift of faith.

Parent note: Remember that God's timing is perfect, and we can trust Him and His timing with our children. We do not have to rush anything. There is no right age or time when a child should profess faith, and not having faith today does not mean they will not have faith tomorrow. Leave room for their doubts. Trust God to meet them there and to show Himself to be a loving, patient Father.

Questions to Discuss:

- 1) Does going to church or doing good save you?
- 2) How is someone forgiven of their sin and accepted by God?
- 3) Do you think you need to be saved?
- 4) Have you trusted in Jesus alone to save you, are you ready to trust in Jesus alone to save you?

Have a time of prayer.

If your child has already or is ready to profess faith, you can use the “In faith we can say” statements on the previous page to pray together for the first time or in thanks for what God has already done.

If your child is not yet ready, you can pray a prayer like this for your child:

Thank you, God, for this precious child that You created and have given to our family. Thank you for all the things we have gotten to talk about together as we go through this workbook. Thank you for the ways we can be honest with one another and how we can always be honest with You. I pray that You would continue to work in their heart, mind and soul to bring them to Yourself and that You would give them the gift of faith. May they see Your beauty, Your perfection, Your goodness, Your sacrifice, Your strength, Your love for them, and may they see Your Son. I trust them in Your good and loving hands. In Jesus name, Amen.

Journal any thoughts or prayers you have.

## **Lesson 5: We Grow in Christ Once We are Saved**

Verses to Consider: Jn 16:33, Acts 2, Rom 8:17, Col 3:1-17, 1 Pet 2:12, Ps 78:4, Mk 16:15

Anyone who is saved by trusting in Jesus alone for salvation and forgiveness can know that God is with you. He will never leave you and will work in your life to help you to grow. There will be challenges and obstacles and temptations and sin, but God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are there every step of the way loving you and using anything that happens in your life for your good. And God gives each of us a job – we get to tell others about Him. God wants to use each one of us to help others to know about His wonderful love.

Some important things we can do to GROW with Christ's help are:

**G:** Go to Church (Give ourselves to worshiping God and loving His family the church.)

**R:** Read your Bible and Pray (God speaks in His word and calls us to talk with Him.)

**O:** Obey God (We obey since He is our Creator and Redeemer who wants good for us.)

**W:** Witness to Others (We want others to know our great God.)

These are not the things that save us – these are the things that once we are saved we will want to make a regular part of our life to help us to grow to be more like Jesus. Talk through each of these areas with your child, and pray for God to help both of you to grow.

As you read your Bible and pray, we would encourage you to keep looking to Jesus. In your life there will be wonderful times, and there will be hard times. In the hard times, we can take comfort in Jesus. He shows us how much the Father loves us and how much God was willing to go through to have us be His child. When your life is hard, you can look to the ways Jesus' life was hard. You can look to the times Jesus was sad or mistreated and see how the Father and the Holy Spirit are with you like they were with Jesus. You are never alone.

Questions to Discuss:

1) Why do you think God wants us to pray? And to read the Bible?

2) What are some ways Jesus' life was hard?

Have a time of prayer together thanking God for Jesus.

Thank you, God, that:

Jesus dying for me shows me how much you love me.

Jesus had hard times in His life that I can look to in my hard times.

Jesus depended on you, and I can too.

You want me to grow and help me to grow to be more and more like Jesus.

Journal any thoughts or prayers you have.

## Lesson 6: Next Steps

We, your church family, are so thankful to have you as part of our church. We pray that our church will be a place where you worship God, grow in your faith, and grow in service and outreach. We also pray that God will use your gifts to bless our church and help it to be what God would have us to be.

We also want you to know that there are many people here who love you and are here for you when you need support or encouragement or when you stumble and fall, because we certainly do, too. We all need Jesus desperately. Your pastor, your elders, your deacons, your women's director, your youth director, your children's director, your Christian Formation teachers, and so many more, are here if you ever want to talk or pray or meet or need help.

If you are ready to profess your faith in Jesus, you or your parents can set up a meeting with two elders. You can choose an elder you or your parents know if you would like. Email Rebecca York at [rebecca@fortworthpca.org](mailto:rebecca@fortworthpca.org) to set this up.

Parent Note: If you are wondering if your child is ready, discussing the first two questions from the next section can help you to understand where your child is.

### **What to expect when you meet with the elders:**

The church leadership is excited to talk with you about your faith, to celebrate your faith, to encourage you and to invite you to begin participating in the Lord's Supper.

There are five big questions that are asked of you when you stand in front of the church to profess your faith. We want to take those questions and discuss them in an age appropriate way when you meet with an elder. Don't worry about saying things in just the right way. The elders you will meet with really just want to talk with you and hear what you think and feel and believe. **They won't ask all of the questions below** and may ask different ones all together but we wanted you to have an idea of what some of the questions might be. It is okay if you don't know the answer to some of their questions. They will ask different questions depending on how old you are and what you might want to talk or ask about as well. It is about an age appropriate expression of faith and not about being able to express everything with just the right words.

Big question # 1: Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?

Question an elder might ask: Do you have a sin problem? What is a sin you need to be forgiven for? What does God think of sin? What is God's mercy and why is it necessary for us to be saved?

Big question #2: Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

Question an elder might ask: Who is Jesus Christ? Do you trust in Jesus to rescue you from your sin? Are you saved by coming to church or doing good? How are you saved by Jesus? Did Jesus stay dead after he died on the cross?

Big question #3: Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

Question an elder might ask: Do you want to live your life the way Christ would want for you to? How do Christians learn what God wants them to do? (Jn 4:24, Ps 119:105, 2 Tim 3:16-17)

Big question # 4: Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

Question an elder might ask: Will you seek to find ways to help at church? Do you know why the church needs your help? Why do we come to church on Sunday? (Eph 5:19-21, 1 Cor 16:2, Heb 13:7)

Big question #5: Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

Question an elder might ask: Will you listen to the elders if they talk to you because they are worried about you? Will you pray for our church and the elders?

Some other questions they might ask (Lesson 7 may help with these):

Why do we have the Lord's Supper? What does the Lord's Supper remind us of? What do the bread and wine represent? Why do we want to take the Lord's Supper? Do you know why you were baptized as a baby? Do you have any questions for us?

After you meet with two of the elders and they get to hear of your faith in Jesus, we will schedule a Sunday for you to stand in front of your church family. You will be asked the five big questions above and say "I do" to each one.

Pray together thanking God for who He is and what He has done.

Thank you God that you are MY God.

Thank you God that I am your child and that nothing can separate me from you.

Thank you Jesus that you died for my sins.

Thank you Jesus that I can trust you with everything.

Journal any thoughts or prayers you have.

## Lesson 7: An Invitation to the Lord's Supper

Verses to Consider: Luke 22:14-20, Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25

When you profess your faith in Jesus Christ and become a communing member of the church, you are invited to begin taking the Lord's Supper (also known as Communion).

The Lord's Supper is one of two sacraments. A sacrament is a fancy word for saying it is an outward sign that shows us God's grace for us that is found in Jesus. Sacraments speak of Jesus and show us Jesus. The other sacrament is baptism. During Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus gave us baptism and the Lord's Supper to remind us of who he is, what he's done, and what it means to belong to Him. Sacraments don't save us. Rather they point to the one who saves us.

In baptism, water is used to show us how Jesus' death cleanses us from our sins. It is also the sign of entering His covenant family, the Church. Baptism is received only once, and in it a person is being marked with the name of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Communion, the bread and wine (or grape juice) are used to remind us that in his death Jesus has given us his life which gives us physical life (symbolized by the bread). We remember His blood has forgiven us that we might now be in a relationship (in communion) with God (symbolized by the wine or grape juice).

Communion is something we do over and over. God uses it to grow us in our relationship with Him. We call the Lord's Supper communion because in eating and drinking, God teaches us, and reminds us over and over, that His salvation means most of all being in relationship with Him by trusting in Jesus. When we take communion, we are being invited to Jesus' table. Therefore, by His Spirit, Jesus is present at the meal and through the meal He grows us in our relationship with Him.

To help you better understand communion, read the passage below and then discuss some questions.

*<sup>23</sup>“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’<sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me.’<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

*<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup<sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.”*

*1 Corinthians 11:23-29*

Questions to Discuss:

- 1) To what does the bread point? (v. 24)
- 2) To what does the wine (or cup) point? (v. 25)
- 3) What should a person do before coming to communion? What do you think this means? (v. 28)
- 4) How should we come to the Lord's Table? (Hint: To come in a worthy manner means knowing you are not worthy. So who is worthy? Do we trust in ourselves or in Jesus?)

Pray with your child.

Thank you Jesus for giving your body and your blood for me.  
Thank you God that taking communion each week helps me to grow as I  
remember what Jesus has done for me.  
Help me remember each week that salvation means I am in relationship with  
you, God, through Jesus.

Journal any thoughts or prayers you have.



Fort Worth Presbyterian Church