



PREPARING FOR BAPTISM AND/OR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Getting Started

If you are prepared to go through this booklet, we **assume** that you are a Christian, and are seeking to be baptized and/or join Cornerstone. If you aren't sure if you are a Christian, or what exactly this means, be sure to contact the church or one of the elders right away. We will gladly sit down with you and help answer any questions you might have. In fact, the very first section of this book (Step 1: Understanding Eternal Life) goes over what it means to be a Christian.

Also, if you are between the ages of ten and sixteen, we strongly encourage you to go over each lesson with a parent or a trusted adult. **(We highly encourage anyone under ten years of age wanting to get baptized to first have his or her parents talk to an elder before going through this booklet)**. If you have questions as you go along, your parents or trusted adult may be able to help you.

As you go through this booklet, you will see that it is divided into four steps. They are:

1. Understanding Eternal Life: Salvation
2. Publicly Declaring your Eternal Life: Baptism
3. Participating in the Lord's Supper
4. Growing in Your Faith

You will also be asked to write out your testimony. We have a place in the back page where you can write this.

Once you complete this booklet, contact the church office and set up a time to meet with one of the elders. An elder will then go over your answers and spend some time with you to make sure we are all on the same page. **No matter your age**, you will have to sit down with an elder and go over your answers and talk about the gospel. For those under 10, we will have both an elder and his wife be a part of the meeting.

If you have any questions while working through this book, please contact the church office and someone will help you out.

We are excited that you are interested in baptism and becoming a part of Cornerstone! We can't wait to sit down and talk with you about this decision. Our biggest goal at Cornerstone is helping you make sure you know exactly what it is to be a Christian and follow Jesus!

God bless,
The Elders

Step One
Understanding Eternal Life: Salvation

The most important thing in anyone's life is knowing whether or not they have eternal life. Eternal life is not based on how you feel but on what God says. That's why it is important to know what the Bible says about eternal life.

Eternal life is something that God gives us because Jesus died for us on the cross. We don't "earn" salvation by doing good things or by not doing bad things. Let's look at what the Bible says about this.

First, we must realize what our biggest problem is--we are sinners!

What is sin? _____

If you need help, read Romans 3:10-18. These verses help us understand just what sin is.

Read Romans 3:23. What does it mean that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?

Now, read Romans 6:23. What are the "wages of sin?" _____
When the Bible says death, it means that we die without eternal life--we would die and go to Hell! This is awful news, but don't worry, God gave us hope! That's what the gospel is--our great hope!

Second, we must realize what our greatest need is--a savior!

Read Romans 6:23, what does the second part of the verse say?

Read Romans 5:8. What does this verse say Christ did for us? _____

Explain what these verses (Romans 6:23 and Romans 5:8) teach us about our need for a savior.

Third, we must realize what we must do--repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord.
Read Romans 10:9-10. What are the two things these verses say we need to do?

When we truly believe that Jesus is Lord, we are saying that He is the ruler of our lives. **We are saying that we are sinners and that we are trusting that Jesus will save us from our sins.** There is no special “prayer” you have to say, just simply speak to Jesus right now (if you haven’t done this already) and ask for His forgiveness and that you want Him as the Lord of your life.

If you have any questions about this section, please reach out to a church leader right away. If you are confident that you have repented of your sins, then move on to the next section.

Step 2
Publicly declaring your eternal life: Getting Baptized

Baptism is the way we publicly declare our faith. Here at Cornerstone, we believe in what is commonly referred to as believer's baptism. That simply means we do not baptize infants, but only those who make an independent decision to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as lord. If you have been baptized after making a profession of faith, please go through this section as a reminder of what baptism is. If you haven't been baptized (or you were baptized as an infant), you will need to be Baptized before joining the church.

Read Matthew 10:32-33. What do these verses teach us about the importance of letting people know that we are Christians?

Read Matthew 28:19-20. In these verses Jesus commanded his followers to do several things. Right there we see that Jesus commanded his followers to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This was the way that people publicly showed that they were followers of Jesus.

Read Acts 2:37-38, 41 and Acts 8:35-38. What do we see the people in these verses doing after they became Christians?

Baptism is a picture of two things. First, **baptism is a picture of what Jesus did for you.** Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. What do these verses reveal about what Jesus did for us?

Second, **baptism is a picture of our own salvation.** Read Romans 6:3-4. How do these verses show baptism as a picture of our salvation?

When a person is baptized, they become a part of the church. Read Acts 2:41 again. When the verse says that 3,000 people were added to their number, it means that these people were now part of the church. Eventually, as the church grew and grew, the church divided up into smaller groups of people. Many of the books of the New Testament were written to these smaller groups. These groups became known as local churches.

Today, there are many thousands of churches in the world. When a person gets baptized, they are to become a part of one of these smaller groups--a local church. In a local church, a Christian is able to learn and grow into being a person that obeys Jesus more and more.

Read Matthew 28:19-20 again. You see that Jesus commanded his followers to teach new Christians all the things Jesus taught them. That's why a new Christian becomes part of the church--to obey Jesus and to become more like him.

Baptism has always been the way people shared the news that they were now followers of Jesus Christ. It is an act of obedience and a direct command from Jesus Christ.

After a person is baptized, they need to understand another command from Jesus--participating in the Lord's Supper.

Step 3
Participating in the Lord's Supper

Once a person is baptized, he or she can begin to join the church in participating in the Lord's Supper.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. This section of the Bible describes the Lord's Supper. Answer a few questions about the Lord's Supper to make sure you understand what it is and why we do it.

What does the bread represent? _____

What does the cup represent? _____

What do Christians "proclaim" when they participate in the Lord's Supper?

In many ways, taking the Lord's Supper is reaffirming our repentance--it is declaring that we are followers of Jesus still. Just as baptism declares our allegiance to Jesus at the beginning, so the Lord's Supper keeps declaring each time we do it.

All of us have a birthday--the actual day we were born. But most of us celebrate our birthday each year. Baptism is like our birthday--it only happens once. But taking the Lord's Supper is like celebrating our birthday each year. We do it over and over.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. In these verses we read that we are to examine ourselves before we take the Lord's Supper. What do you think it means to "examine yourself" before taking the Lord's Supper?

Our final step is just a quick look at what the rest of your life will be--growing in your faith!

Step 4 Grow in Your Faith

It is important to remember that repenting of your sins and getting baptized is only the beginning of your life as a follower of Jesus. We are expected to grow in our faith and become more like Jesus.

Read Matthew 28:19-20. After baptizing people, what did Jesus tell his followers to do?

Here at Cornerstone, we have summed up the major beliefs we have about what it means to be a Christian in our statement of faith. Here is that statement:

God

We believe in one God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, who is infinite in being and absolute in perfection. He exists eternally in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who are one essence and equal in power and glory.

The Father

We believe that God as Father reigns with providential care over His creation. He is all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing, and all-wise.

Jesus

We believe that God the Son became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. He is fully God and fully man, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, sinless in His life, making atonement for the sins of the world by His death. He was bodily resurrected, ascended into heaven and now serves as high priest, intercessor and advocate on behalf of all believers.

Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit is a person. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and draws men to personal faith in Christ. At salvation, He imparts to the believer new life, baptizes him into the body of Christ, and comes to indwell him permanently. The Holy Spirit guides, teaches and strengthens the believer and empowers him to manifest the character of Christ. He gives spiritual gifts to believers for mutual edification.

Bible

We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original manuscripts. It is the final authority on all matters about which it speaks and is sufficient as our only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Sin

Humans were created innocent and with the freedom to choose obedience to God. Man, tempted by Satan, willfully sinned and consequently experienced separation from God. The consequences of this sin affect the entire human race. Since that time, all human beings have been born with a sinful nature, commit acts of sin, and are lost apart from the atoning work of Christ. We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men.

Believers are resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God. Unbelievers are resurrected to experience judgment and eternal suffering apart from God.

Salvation

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior from sin. He died as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin and all who believe in Him are declared righteous on the basis of His shed blood and resurrection. Salvation can be understood through its three components--justification, sanctification and glorification.

Justification

We believe that whoever trusts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord becomes a child of God. This salvation is not achieved by any human effort or merit, but rather is received as a free gift from God by grace through faith. In becoming a Christian, a person acknowledges his total inability to meet the righteous demands of a holy God and places his complete trust for salvation in Jesus Christ who died in his place, paying the penalty for his sin.

Sanctification

We believe that all true believers are kept eternally secure by the power of God through the new birth, the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of Christ. We believe that all Christians still encounter personal sin (from within) and spiritual warfare (from without) in this life, but that from the moment of salvation God has made provision for believers to overcome these through understanding their new identity in Christ, knowing and applying the Word of God, fellowshiping with other Christians, and living by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Glorification

Glorification is the final state of the redeemed occurring after this present life. Glorification is the culmination of the work of salvation that began at justification, continued through sanctification and results in the believer being perfectly righteous without sin. Glorification is an eternal state for the believer.

Church

We believe that all who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit belong to the one true church, the body of Christ. This church is seen in the world through local assemblies of believers who are joined together for the purpose of glorifying God, edifying one another, and evangelizing the world. The church is a theocratic organization served by elders and deacons. The two church ordinances are baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a public testimony of conversion to Christ and the Lord's Supper is a memorial symbolizing His body given for us and His blood shed for the remission of sins.

Christ's Return

We believe in the personal, imminent return of Christ to earth in sovereign power and glory to establish His righteous rule and look for a "new heaven and a new earth" in which righteousness dwells.

Marriage and Gender

We believe that God made humans as both male and female in a complimentary relationship. Gender is a biological reality based on the biological differences between males and females at birth. Marriage is the uniting of one man with one woman for life

where the two become one flesh. We believe that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral and therefore sin.

Some of these statements may or may not be confusing. We do ask that you carefully look over them and note any concerns you have with any of the above statements. We will discuss any issues you have during the elder's interview. Also, you may want to look at our longer document Cornerstone Perspectives to look over how we understand a number of other faith topics (i.e. baptism, music, alcohol, divorce, etc.).

Another way we help people grow in their faith here at Cornerstone is by emphasizing our church covenant. A church covenant is a simple statement of how each of us in the church will live so that we can help each other become more like Jesus.

Here is the Church Covenant at Cornerstone:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord do enter into covenant together through the aid of the Holy Spirit to:

1. To participate regularly in corporate worship services.
2. To participate regularly in a small group.
3. To cheerfully and generously participate in the financial support of the church and in meeting the needs of the body of Christ.
4. To love the church and to promote unity and fellowship within the church body.
5. To live daily under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in order to grow in Christlikeness.
6. To serve the church by using the gifts and abilities God has given me for the good of the church.
7. To volunteer in the ministries of Cornerstone.
8. To respect and follow the leaders of Cornerstone as long as they sincerely seek to follow Christ, the head of the church.
9. To submit to the leadership and correction of the church should I fall into serious moral disobedience or promote dangerous doctrinal error.

As a church, we will recite our covenant from time to time to help us remember our commitment to each other to help each other grow into being more and more like Jesus Christ. Right after you write out your testimony, you will be asked to check off a list and sign your name where you agree to abide by the church covenant.

That's the end of the lessons! On the next page, you will find a place to write out your testimony. If you need more space, just use a blank sheet of paper. Don't feel the need to write a book. Just write about when you became a Christian and a little about what is different about your life now that you are a Christian. Then, on the following page, you will find a place to mark whether you agree to abide by our church covenant. Finally, you will find a sheet where you can provide some basic information for our records (name, address, age, etc.) Please fill all of these pages.

When you are finished, contact the church office and set up a time to sit down with one of our elders. He will help you take the next steps to baptism and church membership.

Testimony (please write out how you came to be a Christian and a little bit about your current spiritual life):

Please initial on each space after the number and then sign and date.

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit God to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord do enter into covenant together through the aid of the Holy Spirit to:

1. _____ To participate regularly in corporate worship services.
2. _____ To participate regularly in a small group.
3. _____ To cheerfully and generously participate in the financial support of the church and in meeting the needs of the body of Christ.
4. _____ To love the church and to promote unity and fellowship within the church body.
5. _____ To live daily under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in order to grow in Christlikeness.
6. _____ To serve the church by using the gifts and abilities God has given me for the good of the church.
7. _____ To volunteer in the ministries of Cornerstone.
8. _____ To respect and follow the leaders of Cornerstone as long as they sincerely seek to follow Christ, the head of the church.
9. _____ To submit to the leadership and correction of the church should I fall into serious moral disobedience or promote dangerous doctrinal error.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Birthday: _____

Type of Baptism (circle): Immersion Sprinkle Pouring I need to be baptized

If baptized, Church where baptized and approximate date: _____

Marital status (circle): Single Married Divorced Widowed

Spouse's name (if married): _____

Kids (if any) and their ages:

Occupation: _____

Areas of church service of which you are interested in volunteering (i.e. children, youth, music, etc.)
