

Waterloo Road Baptist Church

A Child's Spiritual Journey



**Seeking Jesus As Their
Personal Savior**

Our Spiritual Journey

God has entrusted parents and our ministry with the incredible job of laying the foundation for salvation and spiritual transformation. We want children to come to a saving relationship with God and live a life that honors Him. Regardless of age, a relationship with God is a process and a journey.

As we partner together to guide children on their spiritual journey, there are many building blocks that lay the foundation. We wholeheartedly believe that what we teach children about God in their infancy builds as they grow and gives them a framework for their entire world view. Lifeway Christian Resources calls these building blocks the Levels of Biblical Learning. These levels incorporate a child's cognitive and spiritual growth into a framework that allows us to teach children Biblical truth on an appropriate level.

We understand that every child is on their own unique spiritual journey and that some children understand the more complex concepts at a younger age. We never want to say that a child has to be a certain age before he or she can accept Christ. We do want to use discernment to encourage children to make a decision to follow Christ when that specific child is ready.

Our goal is always to encourage a child to pursue Christ at a rate that is appropriate for that child; a rate where we are not holding back or pushing a child forward. We encourage you to read more information on a child's spiritual journey in the book *Kid Faith: A Road Map to Talking about Salvation with Your Children* by Charles Scheffe (Ms. Emily has copies at the PC Desk). We also recommend *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* by Catherine Stonehouse. Also, please check out Lifeway's levels of Biblical learning (<http://www.lifeway.com/n/special-emphasis/levels-of-biblical-learning>).

Building Blocks of Our Spiritual Foundation

First, let's explore the concepts that we strive to instill in children at various ages, the building blocks that make up each child's spiritual foundation.

For infants through young preschoolers, these concepts are very basic because we are laying the very first layer of the foundation.

- God loves me.
- God is good.
- God hears us.
- God helps us.
- God never lies.
- Jesus told people about God.
- Jesus did everything God told Him to do.
- Jesus is alive.

Older preschoolers and kindergarteners begin to lay the second layers of their spiritual foundation.

- The stories in the Bible really happened.
- The Bible teaches us what God is like (His Character).
- The Bible teaches right and wrong.
- People sometimes choose to disobey God.
- Jesus was tempted to sin but never did.
- God loves us and sent His Son who died and rose again.
- The Bible teaches what Jesus did.

Kindergartners through Second graders are still very concrete in their thought process. Abstract concepts like God forgiving us of our sins from now until forever and that we will spend eternity in heaven can be hard for younger elementary kids to grasp. Therefore, starting in First and Second Grade, we really focus on the plan of salvation and what that means for them personally.

- God is perfect.
- God is fair and can be trusted.
- God expects people to obey, respect, and honor Him.
- Sin is choosing my way instead of God's way.
- Jesus took the punishment for people's sins.
- God provided a way for people to become Christians because He loves them.
- God sent His only Son, Jesus, to be the one and only Savior of the world.
- God will forgive me if I ask Him.
- People who trust Jesus as their Savior and Lord are Christians.

Third and Fourth graders add on to their foundation by learning the following concepts:

- Salvation is the gift of eternal life in heaven with God.
- The punishment for sin is separation from God.
- Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins.
- We can all accept the gift of salvation.
- When the Holy Spirit convicts me of my sin, I can trust Jesus as my personal savior.
- God's salvation is a gift that every person needs and can receive.
- God's salvation is eternal. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

Fifth Graders are more advanced in their cognitive abilities and therefore we dig even deeper.

- God had a plan for salvation before the beginning of time.
- Jesus willingly died to provide salvation. His death and resurrection make salvation possible.
- A growing relationship with Jesus is important and necessary.
- Christians can recognize when God is at work in their lives and in the lives of others.
- The Bible teaches how to live a Christian life by following Jesus.

As you can see, there is a distinct and gradual progression towards more complex spiritual concepts that corresponds to a child's cognitive development.

Our Goal

Our goal is to help children through the process so that they don't look back as they grow older and wonder if they truly made a decision. We desire for children to have a combination of head and heart knowledge. Many kids can know the plan of salvation and not be ready to make a decision. Conversely, many kids can want to please God and be saved or baptized without understanding what that truly means. Helping them to have the combination of head and heart knowledge helps them to be sure of their decision. Finally, the conviction of the Holy Spirit must be present for a child to truly make a salvation decision.

With an adult, you can sit down in one setting and present the plan of salvation without needing to define bigger terms. You can ask yes and no questions and an adult will most likely be frank and honest with you.

If you ask a child yes and no questions, they are more likely to answer yes just because they know that is the answer you are looking for and they want to please you. So knowing how to ask open ended questions such as "Can you tell me what sin is?" "Can you tell me a way that you have sinned?" is considerably more beneficial to the child than asking "Do you know that you are a sinner?"

Here are the foundation components we believe children should understand when they make a decision to follow Christ and ask Him to be their Lord and Savior.

□ What is sin?

□ Anything that we say or do that God does not want us to. *A definition that we teach children is that sin is anything we think, say, do, or don't do that isn't pleasing to God.* Sin keeps us from a right relationship with God.

□ Who is Jesus?

□ Jesus is God's Son, sent to earth by God.

□ What did Jesus come to earth to do?

□ Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins so we can have a right relationship with God.

□ Why could Jesus pay for our sins?

□ Because He is God's son and has never sinned.

□ What does it mean to be a Christian?

□ Jesus forgives our sins and we ask Him to be the Boss (Lord) of our lives forever.

□ How is Baptism related to salvation?

□ Baptism doesn't save us. We are baptized because we want to show others the decision we have made.

□ How many times do we have to be saved?

□ One. We can never lose our salvation. We will sin and we should ask for forgiveness, but we only have to ask Jesus to be our Boss (Lord and Savior) once.

Journey Toward Salvation

Many children begin to understand that they are sinners in need of a Savior somewhere between first and fifth grade. Remember that each child's journey will be unique and your child could be younger or older. Again, that's okay! We want children to seek God when the Holy Spirit is convicting them and we aren't in control of that. God Is!

As a child begins to ask questions about Jesus, salvation, and how he or she can personally become a Christian, we encourage the parents to answer their questions. We strongly recommend that the parents work through the *Kid Faith* book with their child as the child begins to ask questions. This book does a wonderful job of explaining all of the components of salvation and how God made a way through His Son Jesus to provide a way to reconcile us to Him. You can pick up the book from Ms. Emily at the PC Desk.

Here are some of the concepts covered in *Kid Faith*.

- Let Us...(God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit)
- What is Sin?
- Sin versus Holiness
- God Sent Jesus
- Jesus Chose to Die
- ABCs (Admit, Believe, Choose)
- Will Jesus Ever Leave Me?

Once the child is ready to make a decision or has already made a decision, we encourage you to come to Ms. Emily and get a New Christian's Book for your child. To help make this as smooth and stress free of a process as we can, we have each child work through a New Christian's book at home.

Here's a short description of what the New Christian's book contains.

- Who is a Christian and what does that mean?
- What is baptism and who gets baptized?
- Who is the Church and how do I fit into the church?
- How do I personally study the Bible?

We believe the New Christian's book gives the child a great foundation, especially for children who are close to making a decision to follow Christ or children who have recently made a decision. Children also begin the spiritual discipline of personal Bible study as they work through the book. As a parent, you will work through the book with your child. Ms. Emily will meet with the child at the end of each chapter to see how things are going and help clear up any potential confusion. We highly encourage parents to attend these meetings with their child.

We don't require that children go up front during a service or meet with the pastor before a baptism is scheduled. However, going up to the front is a positive spiritual marker for children; so we do encourage them to do so. We **do** strongly recommend that all parents go through both the Kid Faith and New Christian's books before baptism is scheduled for their child. Once a child and their parents have worked through these books, we will schedule a final meeting with Ms. Emily to ensure that we are ready to move forward with scheduling baptism. Again, we do not want to push a child towards baptism or hold a child back from baptism. More importantly, we do want to help each child make a decision to follow Christ when the child has been convicted by the Holy Spirit and is ready to make a decision.



Ms. Emily would love to sit down with you and discuss any questions that you might have. Please give her a call at 405.341.9024 or 405.650.8979 to set up a time to chat.

To learn more about our church and ministries visit

www.waterlooroad.org

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