

Taste and See



TWO SESSION PLANS FOR PREPARING CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

Beth Jewett

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introduction

During a baptism ceremony, your pastor may speak these words: “Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive these children in love, pray for them, help instruct them in the faith, and encourage and sustain them in the fellowship of believers?”

Perhaps you’ve responded, “We do, God helping us!” Now you have the opportunity to live out that promise in a very meaningful way as you facilitate this course for families whose children are interested in participating in the Lord’s Supper.

Faith Alive has developed these sessions on the sacraments for *families* because, as the traditional service of baptism suggests, it is covenant parents who bring their children to the baptismal font, promising to instruct them in the faith and lead them, by example, into lives lived for Christ. And it’s the people of God, the worshipping community, who promise to play a supporting role in the nurture of children who’ve been welcomed into the covenant community.

So, unlike materials you may have used for instructing Sunday school children in the Christian faith, this two-session course places parents, not the leader, at the forefront. Your role is that of a facilitator, helping moms, dads, and kids remember their baptisms and connect their baptismal identity to anticipating and participating with God’s people in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

We wish you joy as you use these materials. We’d love to hear about your experiences with these sessions. Email your feedback, stories, and pictures to editors@faithaliveresources.org.

TIP

Your church family may include some children whose parents do not attend your church. If a child in this situation expresses a desire to participate in the Lord’s Supper or to learn more about this sacrament, connect with parents or caregivers in advance to explain what is involved.

Your congregation may also include children who live with caregivers other than their parents. If that’s so, show sensitivity in the words you use, and modify these materials as necessary.

planning tips

GROUP SIZE

These two sessions were designed to be used with a group of six to eight families, or about 24 people total. Feel free to adapt the materials as needed for larger or smaller groups. You'll find some adaptation suggestions within the sessions.

Each of the sessions runs about an hour in length for a group of 24. If you have a smaller number of participants, the session may unfold a little faster. Working with a larger group may take a little extra time.

REGISTRATION

Ask families to sign up for this course in advance so you'll know how many people to plan for. Prior to the first session, send each family a letter encouraging them to bring mementos from their child's baptism, if possible. You'll find a sample letter on page 24.

SESSION FORMAT

Each session begins with a section for you, the leader. This section includes the Scripture passage on which the session is based, a focus statement, session goals, and a Bible background to provide you with helpful theological insights.

At the beginning of each session you'll also find a chart listing the supplies and preparation needed for each of the four steps within that session.

There is some movement during the sessions—you'll begin in an area where families can explore a variety of activity stations, and you'll end with everyone gathered in your church worship area.

TIP

During the sessions families have the opportunity to take a closer look at your church's baptismal font and the serving pieces used for communion. If you will not have access to these items during your sessions, substitute with items that look similar and explain that they are representations of the actual items.

TAKE-HOME DEVOTIONS

After the second session, we recommend that you give each family a copy of the devotional booklet *You're Invited* to encourage them to continue this conversation at home. You can order these booklets in advance by visiting www.faithaliveresources.org or by calling 1-800-333-8300.

Baptism

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 3:13-17

FOCUS

The sacraments remind and promise us that God adopts us as his children and feeds us at his table.

GOALS

- Discover what the sacraments show and tell us.
- Feel sure that God welcomes us into his family through baptism.
- Explore the elements of baptism and receive God's blessing.

BACKGROUND

Most Christians tend to see Jesus' baptism by John as a unique event that's unrelated to their own baptisms. But from the earliest days, the church has recognized that Jesus' baptism tells us much about the meaning of ours.

John was baptizing people in the Jordan River as a sign of repentance and confession of sins. This was not what we now call "Christian baptism." Yet when Jesus comes along and asks to be baptized by John, everything changes.

John is reluctant to baptize the person he has pointed to as the One "who is more powerful than I" (3:11), but Jesus insists that John baptize him to "fulfill all righteousness." In other words, if Jesus is going to be the Savior of sinful people, he must enter the muddy Jordan of their sin in order to redeem them. In this act Jesus identifies with us as his brothers and sisters. From then on, everything he does radically affects our lives. When Jesus is baptized,