



Walking with Children

On the Spiritual Journey

Our Relationship with God

Breath of Life

- Blow up the balloon and then hold the air in the balloon with your fingers
- Genesis 2:7 The LORD God formed a person from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.
- Colossians 1:15 Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
- John 20:22 Jesus breathed on them and said, “receive the Holy Spirit”

Our Walk

- Always begins with God
- Focus is on God
- God is the one who transforms us
- We need to be in God for the world rather than in the world for God
- Engage every relationship in the context of God’s presence and transforming activity

Outline

- Spend time with God
- Reflect on our relationship with God
- Explore elements which foster faith

Key Elements of the Journey

- Informing is good doing is better
- An openness to enter into a child’s world
- God invites us to GROW
- Need for Presence, Engagement and Voice
- Shared Experiences Lead to Shared Story and Identity
- The journey includes
 - Space (Time)
 - Practices
 - Place

Christian Formation

Our continuing journey of being transformed by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ, experiencing and expressing love for God and others.

Mature Faith

Maturity is always connected with the likeness of Christ.

- Roman 8:29 “...be conformed to the image of his son...”
- 2 Cor. 3:17-18 “we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord the Holy Spirit.

Create

Use the materials at your table to illustrate the relationship of you or your family with God

God’s Call to Parents and Community

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Hoped for Spiritual Goals

Personal

Children

Children

- Children are a gift from God Ps 127:3
- Children embody sin Rom 3:23
- Children reflect how we are to enter the kingdom Luke 18:16
- Children are the continuing expression of our spiritual heritage Deut. 6:2 &4-9
- Children are agents of God's unconditional love
- Children give us opportunity to love unconditionally

Biblical Foundations For the inclusion of Children

- Children welcome in God's kingdom Mt.18:2-5, Mk. 9:36-37, Lk. 18:15-17
- The Word of God is for children Deut. 31:10-13
- Teach children God's Word Ps. 78:5-7, Prov. 22:6
- The promise of the gospel, for children Acts 2:38-39
- Children can be God's ambassadors 1 Sam. 3:1-19
- Parents are called as spiritual mentors Deut. 6:4-9, Prov. 1:8, Eph. 6:1-4, Titus 1:6
- Instruction to parents Col. 3:21, 1 Thes. 2:11-12
- Faith Community called to nurture children Deut 6:4-7

Care, Worth, Place and Role

- **Key concerns for infants to 2**
 - Can I trust others to care for me?
- **Key concerns for children 3-6**
 - Worth: How can I help? Modeling/affirming
 - Forgiveness: Am I still loved if I make a mistake?
- **Key concerns for grade school children.**
 - Am I accepted?
 - What's my place in society?
- **Key concerns for teens**
 - Who am I?
 - What is my role?

Explore elements which foster faith

Four Elements Which Foster Spiritual Growth

- **God's Word:** Illuminated by the Spirit
- **Relationships:** United by the Spirit
- **Outward Action:** Directed by the Spirit
- **Worship:** Ignited by the Spirit

GOD'S WORD

Shaping our actions and our lives

"Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:20a

- More than a story/a relationship
- Dwelling with God
- Space
- Practices
- Place

Jesus Calms the Storm

Mark 4:35-41

That day, when evening had come he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on a cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this that even the wind and sea obey him?"

Dwell in the Word

- Find a partner
- You each have two minutes to share
 - How do you sense God in this passage?
 - What questions do you have?
- Partner listen and with share with group

Exploring God's Word

- Dwell in the Word
- Sense exploration
- Visual expression
- Written expression
- Reflective Exploration
- Wondering Questions
 - What did you see or sense?
 - What did you notice about God?
 - What did you notice about you and God?

Sharing God's Word With our Children

- Pray before you begin
- Find a Bible that is age appropriate
- Have children retell the story to you
- Ask Wondering questions about the story Read together with your child or have your child read to you.
- Have children imagine being in the story (Smell, feel, see, touch)
- Act out the story
- Draw a picture about the story

Remember:

- Be open and challenged to be changed by the Holy Spirit together with God's Word
- The Holy Spirit and the community of believers work in concert
- "Life Together" in Christ is our unifying bond
- Passages should be interpreted in the context of the whole of Scripture
- God invites us to participate in this story of love and rescue

Questions for Exploration:

No matter what approach is selected in exploring God's Word, consider using some of the exploration questions below. The questions are meant to pull us further into the God's Word and deeper into our relationship with God.

Sensory Exploration of a Passage

- What do I hear?
- What do I see?
- What do I smell?
- What do I touch?
- What do I taste?

Reflective Exploration of a Passage

- With whom or what do I identify?
- What stands out to me and why?
- What questions do I have for God?

GROW Reflections on a Passage

- What does the passage say about God's character?
- What does it say about relationships?
- What does it have to say about my outward actions?
- How might I worshipfully express my love and gratitude to God?

Wondering Questions concerning a specific text

- I wonder how (someone) feels?
- I wonder how Jesus feels?
- I wonder what (someone) will do?
- I wonder why...?
- I wonder why God...?

RELATIONSHIPS

Matthew 19:19, Hebrews 10:24-25

- Who helped mentor you in faith?
- What were they like?

Our children are watching us...

Learning how to interact with

- Family members and Friends
- Church Family
- Strangers
- Persons of the opposite sex
- Persons of different races
- Persons with varying abilities
- Persons of different generations

Relationship

☉ Mutual discovery

- Engage in every relationship attentive to God's presence and transforming activity.

☉ God inclusive conversation

- Shared what has transpired in your life over the past day or week.
- Include God in the story. When did you feel closest or furthest from God?

☉ Stories

- Disciples of Christ recognize and connect their story to God's story past and present.
- There is no stagnant version of our testimonies of faith.
- Each day new chapters are being written in our communities of faith.

☉ Faith/Life Conversations

- Special time with each child
- Reviewing your day
 - Affirming Interceding
 - Confessing Receiving
 - Thanking Giving

Making Time to Connect

- Morning or Night Time
- Special dates
- Meals
- Car time
- Going for a walk
- Running and errand together
- Sharing a favorite pass time

Relationship in the body

- Christ Established the church Mt. 16:18
- Children are part of the body Mt. 19:14
- Everyone is needed 1 Cor. 12:14-26
- We cannot reach our full potential outside the body 1 Cor. 12:7
Eph 4:11-15
- Being in the body is not always easy Col 3:12-17
- Christ call us to be part of the body and reach out to others Mt. 28:19-20

Key factors for Engaging the generations

- Presence
- Engagement
- Voice

OUTWARD ACTION

- You shall love your neighbor as yourself...
Mark 12:31
- O Mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
Micah 6:8

Serve Together

- *Shared Experience*
- *Shared Story*
- *Shared identity*

John 6:1-14

- Sometimes we feel like the young boy who only has small or seemingly feeble gifts to offer. In this passage God shows us that when we are open to sharing our gifts, no matter how feeble we believe they may be, God can take them and do great things.
- Sometimes others give voice to our feeble gifts. There are two possible responses to Andrews comments:
 - Either agree my gifts are too feeble to offer....or....
 - Live into the hope that God can do something great with them
- Sometimes I need to be careful not to suggest to others that they have nothing worth sharing. But instead encourage the unique offering that everyone has to share.

Give voice to the fact that in God's hands, our gifts however feeble they may seem to us, can be the miracle in someone's life.

Small Groups

What are some service or mission activities you or someone you know have done as a family?

Stack a block for each answer

Some ideas for serving

- Food shelves
- Pray daily for your neighbors and others
- Clothing collection
- Pack school backpack for those in need
- Foster relationships with persons of varying races and cultures
- Read story books that include all races
- Visit a nursing home
- Engage in children's service project

WORSHIP

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:5

Embracing God

Perspective

Reassurance

Redirection

Worshipful Life

- Putting God first in all I do
- Giving myself, my life and my gifts fully to God

Prayer Sticks

- On one side write a prayer of
 - Thanksgiving
 - Intercession
 - Petition
 - Lament
- On the other side the outcome
 - Which may lead to a new prayer
 - Thanksgiving
 - Lament
 - Intercession
 - Request

Prayer Practices

- Thanksgiving at Meals
- Prayer at beginning or end of day
- ACTS
 - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication
- PARTS
 - Praise, Admit, Requests, Thanksgiving Silence

Spiritual Disciplines/Practices

- Praying Scripture (Lectio Divina)
- Dwelling with God
- Reviewing your day
- Praying your community
- Walking with God
- Keeping a spiritual journal

Worshipping Together

- Model faith through attitudes and actions
- Dwelling with God in the bible
- Have regular conversation about faith/life issues
- Include God in daily conversation and story
- Serve others together
- Pray together
- Engage in spiritual disciplines
- Worship with others in the church

Celebrating Spiritual Milestones

- **God's Word**
 - Receiving bibles
 - Reading the bible
 - Praying the bible
 - Studying the bible
 - Bible memorization
 - Leading bible exploration
- **Relationships**
 - Birth
 - Faith/Life Conversations
 - Receiving Christ
 - Extending forgiveness
 - Confirmation
 - Sharing faith with others
 - Discipling others
 - Equipping others to disciple
- **Outward Action**
 - Serving together inside the church
 - Serving together outside the church
 - Living into the fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22-23
 - Engaging in issues of injustice
- **Worship**
 - Baptism/dedication
 - Praying
 - Communion
 - Giving
 - Sharing Story
 - Engaging in Spiritual disciplines
 - Leading others into worship

Devotional Living

- A way of life, rather than a formula for accomplishing a task

No Family is perfect.

Every family needs the Holy Spirit to move them toward the life giving love and grace of Christ in order to be transformed into the family of Christ.

How do you begin your journey of GROWth?

- Be attentive to God's Spirit
- Let God guide your steps
- Prayerfully consider what the journey should look like
- Begin living into one new practice
- It's a journey
- God is with you

Key Elements of the Journey

- Informing is good doing is better
- An openness to enter into a child's world
- God invites us to GROW
- Need for Presence, Engagement and Voice
- Shared Experiences Lead to Shared Story and Identity
- The journey includes
 - Space (Time)
 - Practices
 - Place

Remember:

You are not alone. God is always with you, present and engaged in his transforming activity.

Parenting Resources

Spiritual Parenting, an awakening for today's families.

2010 Michelle Anthony

David C Cook ISBN: 978-1-4347-6447-8

Helping Our Children Grow in Faith

2008 Robert J Keeley

Baker Books ISBN: 978-0-8010-6829-4

Habits of a Child's Heart

2004 Valerie Hess and Marti Watson Garlett

NavPress ISBN: 1-57683-427-1

Parenting Beyond Your Capacity

2010 Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof

David C Cook ISBN: 978-1-4347-6481-2

Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey

1998 Catherine Stonehouse

BridgePoint / Baker Books ISBN: 0-8010-5807-4

The Five Love Languages of Children

1997 Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell

Northfield Publishing ISBN: 1-881273-65-2

Different Children Different Needs

2004 Dr Charles F Boyd

Multnomah ISBN: 0-88070-685-6

Different Dream Parenting, A Practical Guide to Raising a Child with Special Needs

2011 Jolene Philo

Discovery House Publishers ISBN: 978-1-57239-467-2

Real Kids Real Faith

2004 Karen Marie Yust

Jossey-Bass ISBN: 0-7879-6407-7

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk

1999 Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Avon Books ISBN: 0-380-81196-0

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk

2005 Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

HarperCollins ISBN-10: 0-06-074125-2

How To Talk So Kids Can Learn

1995 Adele Faber, Elaine Mazlish

Fireside ISBN: 0-684-82472-8

Bible Reading Guide for Children, Youth and Families

**Need help finding an age appropriate Bible? Looking for Bible helps and resources?
Need some help in how to approach and explore the bible with your children?**

The reading levels posted in this resource are based on grade in school, and are provided as a general guide.

Reading levels use the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula. Individual books of each Bible may vary, with some being more difficult and others easier than the average grade posted.

Young Children Ages 3-6

Bibles: The Beginners Bible: 6 and under
God's Story for Me: 7 and under

Developmental Considerations

1. Need simple, clear directions
2. Require routine and repetition
3. Learn through stories, songs and family routines
4. Can articulate their love for God
5. Can pray
6. Can Understand:
 - I belong to God's family
 - God made me
 - God made everything
 - God is good
 - God loves me
 - God takes care of me

Parent/Mentor Helps

Average attention span: Ages 2-4 (2-4 minutes) Ages 4-6 (from 5-20 minutes)

1. Remember that the Bible is more than a story, it's a way of building and fostering our relationship with God.
2. Brief prayer before you begin to acknowledge God's presence as you read God's Word
3. Tell the story
4. Encourage children to point to the illustrations as they recognize different aspects of the story.
5. Have children retell the story to you
6. End with prayer
7. Keep it short

Prayer examples:

Beginning: God you are with us. Thank you for the Bible. We are glad we have it to read!
Teach us. Amen

End: Thank you for loving us, thank you for this story and for our time together. Amen

Elementary Ages 7-10

Bibles: New International Readers Version Nlrv – Average reading level: 3.0
International Children's Bible ICB - Average reading level: 3.0

Developmental Considerations

1. Learns best by doing
2. Hold concrete images of God
3. Want to belong and please
4. Learning to read and write
5. Ability to list in chronological order
6. Can name bible books and read a Bible reference
7. Limited ability to reflect on spiritual meaning of bible stories
8. Can memorize a few key passages
9. Can grasp simple study of sacraments
10. Ability to engage in simple map studies and use of Bible dictionary

Parent/Mentor Helps

Average attention span: 20 minutes or more

1. Brief prayer before you begin to acknowledge God's presence as you read God's Word
2. As they are able, have child read to you and affirm them as they do so.
3. Don't just ask factual questions ask wondering questions about the story. For example; "I wonder what Moses thought about God, when God spoke to him from a burning bush." What you will discover is a child's feelings about God.
4. Have children imagine being in the story. What would you smell, feel, taste?
5. Act out the story
6. Draw a picture or use a variety of art materials to illustrate the story.
7. Have children retell the story to you. If something seems out of place, do not tell them they are wrong. Sometimes it's a simple misunderstanding about what they are trying to communicate. Instead, ask them to explain their thoughts and then revisit the story for added clarification and self discovery.
8. Finish your time with prayer, thanking God for what you have learned.

Bible Helps

Bible Dictionary: Definition and description of people, places, and key words in the Bible.
Uses: Helpful for expanding understanding of biblical words. Especially those not used today, for example: "ephod" a sleeveless vest worn over a priest's robe made with red, blue, and purple cloth, woven with gold.

Link to on line bible dictionary:

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/>

Middle School Ages 11-14

Bibles: God's Word Translation GW – Average reading level: 5.1
New Century Version NCV – Average reading level: 5.1
New Living Translation NLT – Average reading level: 6.4
New International Version TNIV/NIV – Average reading level: 7.8

Developmental Considerations

1. Beginning ability to grasp abstract ideas in scripture
2. Not satisfied by simple answers
3. Needs challenging activities
4. Describes God in human terms
5. Clings to faith attitudes of parents
6. Likes to make own decisions
7. Needs parents but wants independence
8. Faces a lot of peer pressure

Parent/Mentor Help

1. Brief prayer before you begin to acknowledge God's presence as you read God's Word
2. Have your child read to you or read together
3. Don't just ask factual questions ask wondering questions about the story. For example; "I wonder what Moses thought about God, when God spoke to him from a burning bush." What you will discover is a child's feelings about God.
4. Draw a picture or use a variety of art materials to illustrate the story.
5. Encourage your child to ask questions about the story. Ask them to share their thoughts about the questions before offering your thoughts.
6. Consider exploring these questions: What does this passage say about God? What does this passage say about people? What does this passage say about how to live, or how not to live? What is God saying to you? What do I want to say to God?
7. Consider praying the scripture (Psalms are a good place to start). Take turns each reading twice through a small portion of scripture while the other reflects with closed eyes on the passage and listens for a word or phrase that attracts them. Next move into prayerful silence as each of you considers what the word or phrase means to you. What might God be saying to you? Finally share your thoughts with each other.

Bible Helps:

Concordance: Alphabetical index of every word in the Bible.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/>

Uses: If you can't remember where a verse in the Bible is but you can remember a word from the verse you can look it up and find the verse location. It's also helpful for comparing the use in scripture of a particular word.

Bible maps and charts: Uses: maps are helpful in pin pointing where a biblical event takes place, distance between events, and for mapping out the journey of a person in the Bible. Charts may include timelines, family trees, lists of judges, kings, prophets, teachings of Jesus, miracles, the apostles, etc. They are often helpful for understanding order, remembering persons and stories, or for finding passages that include a particular person or story.

<http://www.bible-history.com/maps/>

<http://www.ntgateway.com/tools-and-resources/maps/>

Senior High Ages 15-17

Bible:

- New Living Translation NLT – Average reading Level: 6.3
- English Standard version ESV – Average reading level: 7.4
- New International version TNIV/NIV – Average reading level: 7.8
- New Revised Standard Version NRSV – Average reading level: 10.4
- New American Standard Bible NASB – Average reading level: 11.0

Developmental Considerations

1. Wants to know what being a Christian really means
2. Interest in other beliefs and faiths
3. Able to take another's point of view
4. May imagine God as a friend and advisor
5. May reject situations where failure is likely
6. Can move away from parent's faith
7. Want to see faith reflected in the life of a believer
8. Friends often influence decisions

Parent/Mentor Helps

1. Brief prayer before you begin to acknowledge God's presence as you read God's Word
2. Take turns reading scripture together
3. Encourage your son or daughter to ask questions about the story. Ask them to share their thoughts about the questions before offering your thoughts.
4. Consider exploring these questions: What does this passage say about God? What does this passage say about people? What does this passage say about how to live, or how not to live? What is God saying to you? What do I want to say to God?
5. Remember, you don't have to have all the answers. Even the most learned theologian does not have all the answers. Consider using some of the helps below for working through a difficult text.
6. For some journaling might be helpful. After reading through a passage of scripture jot down your thoughts in a journal. Here is one approach:
 - a. **Review:** What is God saying to you through this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your thoughts as you read. What jumps out at you? Write your thoughts and include the portion of scripture that was particularly meaningful. You can write this in your own words.
 - b. **Reflect:** How does what you have written apply to your life right now? Is there some instruction, encouragement, promise, or revelation? Write it down.
 - c. **Respond:** What do I want to say to God? Write it down.
7. Consider praying the scripture (Psalms are a good place to start). Take turns each reading twice through a small portion of scripture while the other reflects with closed eyes on the passage and listens for a word or phrase that attracts them. Next move into prayerful silence as each of you considers what the word or phrase means to you. What might God be saying to you? Finally share your thoughts with each other.

Bible Helps:

Concordance: alphabetical index of every word in the Bible.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/>

Uses: If you can't remember where a verse in the Bible is but you can remember a word from the verse you can look it up and find the verse location. It's also helpful for comparing the use in scripture of a particular word.

Commentaries: Provide commentary on authorship, background, context, and grammar of the biblical text.

The best commentaries include multiple potential interpretations of difficult passages. Most commentaries focus on one book of the Bible and examine each passage. However, there are also single volume commentaries that provide a more sweeping view and are less detailed.

Use: Can be helpful when trying to understand passages that seem confusing, use figurative language, or when trying to understand the historical context of a passage. Remember commentaries provide insights not absolute truth about a passage.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/>

Word Studies: Provides background, meaning and examines use and context of the words in the Bible.

Use: Helpful in understanding key words in a passage of scripture.

<http://www.biblegateway.com/keyword/>

Children and Communion

Steve Burger

Children who have accepted Christ are welcome at the table. Mark 10:13ff demonstrates Christ's desire to welcome and include children into the Kingdom. Luke 22:17-19 is a command by Christ to participate, regardless of age. Our position as a denomination is that parents know best if their children have received Christ so we leave the decision to them.

It is also true that children do not fully comprehend cognitively the purposes behind communion. This is even difficult for adults. Presence at the table however, is more than cognitive understanding (even though this is important) it is a communing with God. The depth of a child's spiritual communion with God at the table could be greater than one who knows all the right answers.

There are many who use the 1 Corinthians 11 passage as a proof text for keeping people away from the table. The reality is that this passage is first of all talking about communion within the context of the body. Its primary focus is on proper order within the body. It is also an issue of the heart for both the gathered body and for individuals, but the emphasis is on the body.

The focus of the sacrament however, is on Christ and our relationship with Christ. Further, the sacrament is more than just individuals coming to the table. It is a binding of the gathered body to Christ.

In Matthew 12:1-8 Jesus makes the point that the law belongs to God and is misunderstood apart from God.

"one greater than the temple is here"

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice,"

"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"

In this text it is clear that Christ is the focus and merely going through the motions of ritual are meaningless even if everything is done according to the law if the law and ritual supersede the relationship with Christ.

Christ always looks at the heart. And no one's heart is blameless. But if our hearts are open to Christ, then Christ and Christ alone can make our hearts blameless.

Communion is a part of our ongoing journey of transformation both as individuals and as a body. We invite more than persons, we invite the body (1 Corinthians 12) to the table. And we are really inviting the body to commune with Christ.

The bread and cup are important because Christ established this sacrament as a reminder of whom Christ is, what Christ has done, what Christ has promised and what Christ is graciously doing even in the midst of communion. Further, it binds

us as a body to Christ. When a child or adult partakes of the sacrament they are identifying with Christ as well as with Christ's body, (the church). Partaking of the bread and cup is a concrete sign of our belonging to Christ as well as to a body bound together by the body and blood of Christ. Children by nature, often grasp this truth better than adults because of an earnest desire to "belong" to both Christ and the body.

Finally the sacrament carries with it an element of mystery. This is the Spirit graciously at work in the life of the body as we gather around the table, binding us together with Christ in ever deepening ways. This mystery is bound up in relationship, our relationship with God, present in the Spirit and bestowed upon us through Christ's gracious love. By establishing this sacrament, Christ has provided a means to transform us, drawing us near to God and the body if we are attentive to the Spirit.

Revised 10-15-12a

Communion: Tips for talking with children

Communion

Here are some suggestions for exploring and preparing children to participate in communion.

First ask children what they think communion is about and what it means to them. Affirm them for those parts they understand. You may also gently guide them toward deeper understanding if needed by using the questions below.

Communion means sharing something with others.

Communion is a special time of God sharing and being with us, and our sharing and being with God and each other. It is a time of joining with Jesus.

We celebrate communion because Jesus asks us to. Luke 22:17-19

We call it a celebration because of Jesus love for us, and because it is a gift to us from God.

Juice and bread are the kind of things we need in order to live. We can't live unless we have something to drink and eat. When we drink the juice and eat the bread during communion it reminds us that:

1. Jesus is God and Jesus gives us life.

How do you feel knowing Jesus is the one who made you and gives you life?

Why do you think Jesus made you?

2. Jesus loves us so much that he gave up his life to remove our sin so we can live with Jesus now and forever. (Sin is any thought, word, or action that is contrary to the will of God.) Because of Jesus love for us, Jesus died on the cross, taking on our sin and giving up his body and life-blood. The bread that we break is a reminder of Jesus broken body on the cross, which he lovingly gave for us. The juice that we drink is a reminder of the life-blood of Jesus poured out for us. That's why we say the bread is Jesus body and cup is Jesus blood. Both point to the promise of our new eternal life with Jesus. A life that begins the moment we accept Jesus as our God. This is why we say Jesus is our Savior, because Jesus death and resurrection has saved us from sin and death and has given us new life.

I wonder what Jesus is like that he would do this for us? What do you think?

3. Jesus gives life and has power over death. Jesus over came death through the resurrection. Jesus is risen from the dead and promises that he will do the same for you. But Jesus also rose from the dead so he could share life with you right now.

What is life with Jesus like for you now?

Do you ever talk with Jesus or feel Jesus is near? Tell me about that.

Or if they can't answer, ask; When do you feel closest to Jesus?

4. Jesus is gracious. Our life, God's love, and the forgiveness of sin are not things we can earn, or things we deserve. They are unmerited gifts from God. Given freely to us because of God's gracious love for us. Communion is a sacrament, a visible and outward sign of an inward invisible grace.

How do you feel knowing you can't earn Jesus love?

I wonder why Jesus is always with us, gives us life, and forgives us even when we aren't perfect?

5. In the Evangelical Covenant Church everyone who has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord is invited to participate in communion.

What do you think it means that Jesus is your Savior?

What do you think it means that Jesus is your Lord?

* Savior and Lord

- Savior comes from the word save. It means we recognize that Jesus loves us and has saved us from our sinfulness and from death. When we sin, we can ask Jesus to forgive us, and Jesus will remove our sin and help us to turn away from sin.

- Let's do that now.

Are there any thoughts you have had, or words you have said, or actions you have done that you want to ask Jesus to forgive you for?

The bible reminds us that when we confess/share our sin with Jesus, that Jesus does forgive us. (See 1 John 1:8-9)

- Jesus is also our Savior because he has saved us from our old life apart from God and given us a new life with God.
 - *I wonder how a new life with Jesus is different than our old life apart from Jesus?*
- We recognize Jesus as Lord because Jesus has power and authority over all creation and we seek to follow and live for Jesus because of Jesus love for us and our love for Jesus.
 - *How do you think Jesus wants us to live?*
 - *What are some ways you are following and living for Jesus?*

6. There is a mystery present in communion.

What does mystery mean to you?

(Something that is not fully understood)

I wonder what it means that Jesus is with us in a special way during communion?

When we participate in communion, God is present in a special way drawing us near to Jesus and to those we are participating with. This can be one of those

times when you feel closest to Jesus. That's why communion is not something we rush through.

We will take time to pray and draw close to Jesus before, during and after we receive the bread and juice.

7. We remember, celebrate, and live

We remember that:

Jesus is God
Jesus gives us life
Jesus loves us
Jesus is gracious
Jesus died for us
Jesus rose from the dead
Jesus lives
Jesus will come again

We thank and praise Jesus through

Song
Prayers
Communion

We live with and for Jesus who is always:

With us
Guiding us

Life with Jesus

I wonder how Jesus guides us?

If you can remember, tell me of a time when Jesus guided you.

Explain the steps of communion in the church and ask if they have any questions.

You may also want to eat some bread and drink some juice while you have this discussion. Then talk about how just eating bread and drinking juice is different from prayerful and focused moments of eating the bread and drinking the juice during communion.

Prayer to help guide children in acknowledging and claiming Christ

Jesus I believe you are God, you made me and are always with me

Jesus I believe you love me always even when I make mistakes or sin

Jesus I believe you love me and forgive me

Jesus I believe you will help me to love myself and love others

Jesus I believe you will love me forever

Jesus I love you and want to follow you and love others

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