

Christ Community Church Children's Communicants Manual



A Workbook for Preparing Children to be
Communing Members of the Church

"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." Deuteronomy 6:6-7



When should a covenant child (a non-communing member of the church) begin taking communion? This is a question all parents of younger children in the church are facing. As expressed in Scripture, communion is entered into only by those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ. The Session of CCC is excited to announce the availability of "communicant" materials for this purpose.

These materials can either be used by parents who wish to begin instructing their children at home in what it means to take communion or 2) participate in a class to be offered in the Spring of 2015 to assist children and their parents with this process.

Once your child has gone through the materials, then 1 to 2 elders will gladly meet with parents and child to talk about, and rejoice, what a blessing it is to share in this table experience with our Lord and Savior. The role of elder in this process is to hear a child's profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and to encourage and answer any questions that he/she may have about taking communion. Although it is nearly impossible to set a minimum age at which a child understands enough about personal sin, forgiveness, and the need of a personal Savior, we do recommend that a child be at least 10 years old before going through the communicant materials.

By His Grace,

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Introduction: Why do we do this?

The statement, "We live in a mobile society," is true and is evident in many ways. Our ability to travel far exceeds the ability and imagination of our grandparents. Distances can be covered more quickly and with greater ease than ever before. Just as geographic boundaries have been minimized, so, too, have denominational boundaries. In the past it was often the case that a number of generations of a family belonged to the same denomination. Today the membership of a local church often reflects a wide variety of denominational backgrounds, each with different perspectives or nuances regarding significant issues within the church. This truth solidifies the importance for local churches to communicate their distinctive beliefs in key areas of church life. One of these "significant issues" is the Lord's Supper. There are several Biblical principles that shape our understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper. These can be summarized as the principles of:

Re-Institution. God's relationship with His people is called a covenant. In the Old Testament God gave His people acts to perform to serve as signs of His work of grace: circumcision and the Passover. These are known as the signs of God's covenant of grace. With the coming of the King and the inauguration of His Kingdom, Jesus has re-instituted the sacraments of the covenant of grace, replacing them with baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Regeneration. Jesus said that a person is not able to see the Kingdom of God unless he/she is born from above (John 3:3). Therefore, a person is not brought into the Kingdom by physical birth or even a sacrament (Romans 2:28). We recognize that a person may be "chosen from before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), but not justified (brought into a relationship with God) until he/she repents and believes the gospel as the Holy Spirit applies salvation in space and time.

Remembrance. Jesus tells us to "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Paul reiterates this in his first letter to the Corinthians (11:24, 25). We are to recall what Jesus has done for us—historically, corporately, and personally.

Reflection. Paul told the Corinthians to "examine" themselves before coming to the Lord's Table. Although this admonition is tied to a specific problem, this principle transcends the moment. In light of Paul's similar admonition in 2nd Corinthians 13:5, Christians are to reflect on their relationship to Christ and relationship to His body, the Church.

Re-Telling. By participating in the Lord's Supper we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes (I Corinthians 11:26). We proclaim this in our partaking and then our proclamation as we follow Him. In light of these principles, an overarching theme emerges that governs our practice of the Lord's Supper: *relationships*. The first relationship is between the individual and God. The table is the Lord's, and He restricts its use to His children. But His Word also places additional relational boundaries around His table, even for His own. Once a person is in a right relationship with the Head of the Church, Jesus, it naturally follows that a person will align himself or herself with His Church. Finally, since the Church is made up of people, a person should examine him or herself to make sure that, as much as is possible, there is no discord with others. As Matthew 5:23-24 teaches us, reconciliation is of utmost importance.

These principles highlight the distinction between baptism and the Lord's Supper as being the difference between a passive sacrament (baptism—an act done to you by another as you enter the covenant community) and an active sacrament (Lord's Supper—a meal you engage in as a member of the covenant community). Since there are responsibilities associated with engaging in the Lord's Supper, a child is not automatically served the Lord's Supper upon a profession of faith. The child must also be capable of understanding and embracing the responsibilities that accompany communing membership.

As a church that is both confessional and connectional, our practices are representative of both our past community (as expressed in The Westminster Confession of Faith) and our present community (Presbyterian Church in America).

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Eligibility and Responsibility Requirements



A. Eligibility for Communing Membership

1. Age Qualifications

Although the Holy Spirit works in people whenever and however He pleases, and children mature in their walk with Christ according to a variety of factors, it is our belief that sometime between the ages of 10-12 that children are able to understand what it means to be a believer as well as the responsibilities that accompany a relationship with Jesus and His Church. This does not mean that there is no child capable of communing prior to such time, nor does it mean that every child at a certain age is automatically assumed to be ready for the Supper. Rather, we offer this statement as a generality while also wanting to accent the uniqueness factor mentioned above.

2. Prior Profession of Faith and Willful Initiation

Before a child begins participation in the Communicants Class he/she should have already made a profession of faith (normally to a parent or guardian). Since being a communing member of a church brings with it added responsibilities, we require that the child express a strong desire to become a communing member—we do not want children seeking this at the coercion of their parents or anyone else.

3. Instruction and Examination

Instruction is necessary in order to understand what it means to be a communing member. This publication provides the type of information that a child should already possess when seeking to become a communing member. Thus, the Communicants Class itself should be a confirmation of where a child is in his/her relationship to Jesus and the Church. Upon completion of the instruction, the child will have the opportunity to share his/her profession of faith with the church elders, who desire to diligently balance the need to hear of a child's profession with the tenderness necessary to communicate with children. Although the same type questions will be asked to children as are asked to adults (for example: profession of faith; understanding of a need for a Savior; understanding of the elements in the Lord's Supper; understanding of the importance of the church and each person's responsibility to support it), they will be asked in an age

appropriate manner. For the comfort of the child, and to help in communication, we ask that the parents/guardians be present for this joyous occasion.

4. Certain Limitations

Children who become communing members are still subject to the following limitation: they may not vote in congregational elections prior to the age of 18.

B. Responsibility of Parents

1. Parental Instruction

The Bible teaches that the primary responsibility for the spiritual training of children belongs to the parents (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Ephesians 6:4). Therefore, this class and manual are not designed to replace the instruction of parents. It is designed to ensure that Christ Community is consistent in the manner it approaches our covenant children and as an aid to the elders as they seek to fulfill their responsibility of "careful examination" of young persons who seek to become communing members (Book of Church Order, Ch. 57-2).

2. Parental Review

Before enrolling a child in the Communicants, a parent must ask him or herself the following important questions:

- (1) Is it apparent to me that my child has exhibited, both through knowledge of the facts and fruit of his/her life, that he/she knows Jesus as Savior and Lord?
- (2) Does my child understand what it means to be a member of Christ's Church and the responsibilities that accompany this?
- (3) Does my child realize the importance of the Lord's Table and the consequences to those who partake of such unworthily?
- (4) Am I willing, even after having my child attend this class, to delay my child's coming to the Lord's Table if I, my pastor, or my elders

have any doubt about his/her salvation or genuine interest in being a communing member?

C. Responsibility of Church Elders

The elders have the responsibility of assisting parents in their role as the primary teachers of their children. To this end, the elders are available to offer ideas, suggestions, and guidance, pray with and for families, meet with families to discuss spiritual issues or areas of concern, and interview children desiring to become communing members.

Student's
Guide
Section One:
My Relationship with God



Section One, Lesson One
The Truth about Humanity

I. The Original State of Man

Read Genesis 1:26-2:17

- A. God created man (humanity) as _____ and _____. He created them in His own _____. What does it mean to be created in God's image? It does not mean that we are a _____, but that we have some of the same qualities that God has, like wisdom, knowledge, love, and the ability to communicate.
- B. Because God created humanity to be in His image, He created them to be in a _____ with Him. God gave them the privilege to subdue the earth and rule over His _____.

Q: "How did God create man?"

A: "God created man, male and female, in His own image and in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to rule over the other creatures." WCF, SC #10

- C. God placed one limitation upon humanity. They could eat from anything in the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of _____ and _____. This agreement has been called a _____. In this relationship both parties (God and Adam) pledged to honor the conditions of the covenant. This has been called the covenant of works.

II. The Origin of Sin

Read Genesis 3:1-24

- A. In this passage we learn of someone who is referred to as the serpent. We know that this is God's enemy, who is also called Satan. In what way did Satan tempt mankind to disobey God?
- B. Did Adam and Eve believe the serpent's word or God's Word?

What happened to the relationship between God and Adam and Eve after they had disobeyed?

Q: "Did our first parents remain as they were created?"

A: "Left to the freedom of their own wills, our first parents sinned against God and fell from their original condition." WCF, SC #13

- C. Disobeying God is called _____. What are the different ways we can disobey?
-

Q: "What is sin?"

A: "Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way." WCF, SC #14

III. The Consequences of Sin

Read Romans 5:12-14, 18-19

- A. The wonderful fellowship God and mankind had enjoyed was now broken. Not only did God punish mankind by having them leave the garden, but He also placed all creation under a _____, so that humanity's _____ over it became very difficult. Another result of God's punishment was that Adam and Eve would no longer live forever physically but would eventually die.
- B. Because all men and women come from Adam and Eve, the curse of difficult work and physical death has been passed on to all people. This is why the Bible teaches that we are all born

spiritually from God. Write out the following two verses and discuss them with your parents:

Romans 3:23: _____

Romans 6:23: _____

IV. Summary

The Bible teaches that men and women are sinners. We disobey God's law in different ways, either by doing things we should not or failing to do the things we should. This means that we have broken God's standard for obedience, and we justly deserve His punishment. Jesus told us that we are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Since we begin life spiritually separated from God, and then fail to live up to His law, we are unable to save ourselves from our sins, and rightly deserve God's wrath. Yet there is hope. Let's learn more about the character of God in Lesson Two.

Section One, Lesson Two

God's Response

I. Review

Read Matthew 5:48

The Bible teaches that every person who has ever lived has failed to live up to God's standard for obedience, which is obeying God in all ways-our _____, _____, and _____. As we learned in Lesson One, the sin of Adam and Eve brought death into the world for the first time. Remember that Romans 6:23 teaches that the wages of sin is _____. Our physical death is a picture of _____ death. If God loved Adam and Eve, why did He not just forgive them and forget about what they did? To understand why, we must understand more about God.

II. What God is Like

- A. In 1ST John 4:8, the Bible teaches that God is _____. In 2ND Peter 3:9 we read that God is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. We also learn from the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:31) that God is _____. These are wonderful truths about what God is like, but they do not give us the complete story.
- B. Psalm 89:14 teaches us that along with God's love and faithfulness, righteousness and _____ are the foundation of His throne. Because God is righteous and just, He will always do what is right, which includes punishing sin (Exodus 34:7).

This presents a problem for us, but not for God. God is merciful, but He is also just and must punish sin. He had a plan all along.

III. God's Plan

God's plan involves many important truths. We will focus on three:

- A. Read 2ND Corinthians 5:21. God's plan involves a _____. What if the punishment for sin was not forgotten, but instead given to someone else! Then men and

women would not get what they deserved. We call this the _____ of God. By God keeping His Word to punish sin we see His justice; by God punishing a substitute, we see His mercy.

- B. Read John 3:16. God's plan involves His _____. In order for God to be just, He would have to punish a _____ person, not someone who had sinned. A sinful person may be able to die for his own sin, but not someone else's. So God in His love for us sent His only Son to earth to become a man so He could be a sinless substitute for us. Write out John 3:16 and memorize it.

Scripture shows Jesus Christ, God's Son, fulfilled the covenant of works that Adam and Eve could not. He obeyed perfectly. God accepted Jesus' suffering and death as a substitute for our sin. He proved this by raising Jesus from the _____. Now those who believe in Christ can have _____ and are _____ from eternal punishment in hell (John 3:36). When a person believes in Jesus, God forgives this person as if they had never sinned.

- C. Read John 14:26. God's plan involves sending His _____. God not only sent us His Son, Jesus Christ, He also sent a Helper known as the Holy Spirit. Why did we need someone else? Since we were dead in our sins, God knew that we would not _____ in His Son on our own. He sent God the Holy Spirit to renew us and lead us to believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. We do not work to receive the eternal life that comes to us through the Holy Spirit, it is a free _____.(Ephesians 2:8,9). However, God has a plan, not

only for our being saved from sin's penalty, but for our lives as well (Ephesians 2:10).

- D. As we have worked through this lesson you may have noticed that God has worked as three persons: God the _____, God the _____, and God the _____. Together, we call these the Trinity, which means three in one. We believe that there is one God who exists in three persons. Although this is difficult for us to understand completely, we trust God's Word to tell us what we need to know.

IV. Summary

God is merciful and does not want to punish us. Yet God is also just and must punish sin. God solved this problem by sending His Son as a substitute. Jesus took our punishment and died in our place. God proved that Jesus' death was an acceptable substitute by raising Him from the dead. God also sent His Holy Spirit to renew the hearts of people and lead them to believe in Jesus for eternal life. We will learn more about this as we consider the key to eternal life in Lesson Three.

Section One, Lesson Three The Key to Eternal Life

I. Review

Salvation is a free gift, but it is not cheap. God had to send His Son, Jesus, to die as a substitute for sinners. This did not surprise God, it was part of His plan. God also planned the way that we respond to the work of His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit renews our hearts and makes it possible for us to respond to God's offer of salvation. To understand how we are to do this, we need to learn what the Bible teaches about the keys to eternal life.

II. The Keys to Eternal Life

Read Mark 1:15

In Mark 1:15, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is near, _____ and _____ the good news." Repentance and belief are the two keys that open the door of eternal life. Perhaps a better way to think of this is that they are two sides to the same key, for they work together. Or, they are often considered two sides of the same coin. Just as a coin has two sides to it, yet it is only one coin, so salvation has two sides to it, yet there is only one salvation. When you look at a coin, it does not matter which side you look at first. The same is true about salvation-the important thing is that you look at both sides.

A. The key of repentance.

1. Read Mark 2:13-17. Jesus told the Scribes that only those who are sick need a doctor. Not only those who are sick, but those who _____ they are sick. (If a person does not believe he or she is sick, that person may not seek help, but still suffer from the sickness) The sickness Jesus was talking about was _____. Some people do not believe that their sin separates them from God. They think they can rely on their own goodness to get to heaven. But this is not what the Bible teaches.

2. Read Romans 3:9-12. The Bible teaches that "there is no one _____." What this means is that there is not one person who is able to get to heaven because of their own goodness? Why? Because we are all "sick" and in need of the healing that Jesus provides in salvation. No matter how good we may be, this cannot make up for the fact that we have sinned. (Think back to the first lesson. What are the different ways we are able to sin? We sin in our _____, _____, and _____.) And no matter how good we are, we still fall short of Jesus' standard of goodness: which is _____.(Matthew 5:48).

3. What is repentance? Repentance is not simply admitting that we have not met God's standard and saying, "Oh, that doesn't matter, God will forgive me." Nor is it only being sorry for your sin when you get _____. It is recognizing that (1) I have sinned and (2) I need to turn away from whatever displeases God. We must trust Jesus to forgive us and help us overcome it the next time. Write out 1st John 1:8-9 and discuss it with your parents:

B. The key of believing (faith).

There are different ways to believe in something.

1. We can believe in something because we know about it. Do you believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States? If you do, you believe based on accepting certain facts. Believing facts is important. The facts we believe about Jesus-that He lived, died, rose from the dead-are important, but not enough to save us. The Bible teaches that

the demons believe the facts about God, but are not saved (James 2:19).

2. The kind of faith that the Bible tells us to have not only involves believing because we know facts about Jesus, but it also requires that we agree with these facts and trust in Jesus alone for salvation. Try this experiment to help you better understand what it means to trust. Set an empty chair beside you. For the purposes of the illustration, call the chair the "Jesus chair." Ask these questions about the chair:

- (1) Do you believe the chair exists? (Yes, I put it there!)
- (2) Do you believe the chair is able to support your weight? (Yes!)
- (3) Why is the chair not supporting your weight right now? (You are not sitting in it!)

This simple illustration helps us understand what biblical faith is like. It is not simply believing that Jesus existed, nor is it believing that He could save you, it is getting off of whatever you are presently trusting in and trusting Jesus enough to go and sit in His chair—placing the weight of your life upon Him!

III. Receiving the Gift of Eternal Life

Read Acts 16:25-31

Does this make sense to you? Have you repented of your sin and believed in Jesus for eternal life? If you have not, would you like to receive the gift of eternal life? (Sometimes people are not certain that they have eternal life even though they have made a profession of faith. In this case it is helpful to reaffirm the commitment by clarifying what is required and talking to God about it.)

A. Clarification

Receiving the gift of eternal life involves transferring your _____ to Jesus (remember the chair illustration) and repenting of your _____. By doing this you will be receiving Jesus as the Lord and Savior of your life. If this is what you would like to do, we can talk to God and tell Him.

B. Prayer

Dear God, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You sent Jesus to die on the cross and rise from the dead to purchase a place in heaven for me. Lord Jesus, come into my life; take control of my life; forgive my sins and save me. I repent of my sins and now place my trust in You for my salvation. I accept the free gift of eternal life.

C. Jesus' Promise Read John 6:47

Jesus says that the person who believes has everlasting life. This is a _____ from Jesus.

D. Your Spiritual Birthday

If you have prayed to receive eternal life today, then this is your spiritual birthday! If you have recommitted yourself to Jesus, then this is also a very important day for you. Sometimes the people in the Bible would do the same thing (see Joshua 24, especially verses 14-15).

IV. Summary

Whether you have committed yourself to God today, or at some point in the past, the important thing to remember is that you belong to God because of His grace and love. Our love for God is in response to what He has done for us. When the Holy Spirit renews us so we can understand His great love, we respond by turning from our own ways and trusting in His way for eternal life. When this happens, He receives us into His family as adopted children (Ephesians 1:5). As members of God's family, we have new responsibilities that God gives us to help us grow into a person who is healthy spiritually. We will discuss these in the next lesson.

Section One, Lesson Four Ways to Grow as a Christian

I. Review

When the Holy Spirit renews us so we can understand His great love, we respond by turning from our own ways and trusting in His way for eternal life. We also trust in God's way for how we live in this life. Since God created us, He knows the best way for His creation to live and think. It always helps to follow the directions when you are trying to put a toy, a bicycle, or a puzzle together. The same is true for our lives. God has given us His directions for our lives in the Bible. In the Bible we learn of ways we can grow into healthy followers of Jesus.

II. Ways to Grow

A. Reading God's Word. Read 1st Peter 2:2; 2nd Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible is God's guidebook for our lives. In fact, it should be our final authority in life, shaping our thoughts and actions. We live in a time and country where God's Word is available to us in our own language—what a shame if we do not take advantage of this great gift from God! If we do not read God's Word on our own, we are left to our memory of what it teaches. There are many different ways to read the Bible: some people try to read the entire Bible each year; others focus on specific books; others study what the Bible teaches about certain topics. Discuss with your parents how you can read the Bible either on your own or as part of a family reading plan. Write down one idea from this discussion:

B. Talking to God. Read Matthew 6:9-13

We call talking to God —prayer. We do not need to use special religious words to talk with God—He is our heavenly Father and loves

to have us talk with Him from our hearts! One helpful way to talk to God is to use the Lord's Prayer as a guide. In this prayer we:

Praise Him for who He is (Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name);

Ask that His kingdom and will would rule this world (Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven);

Request that He provide for our physical needs (Give us this day our daily bread);

Request that He provide for our spiritual needs (Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors);

Request that He guide our lives and protect us (And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one);

Praise Him and His greatness (For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever).

Another way to help you pray is to pray the prayers of the Bible. Many of the psalms were prayers that were sung. There are also many other prayers, such as: Ephesians 1:17-23; 3:14-21; John 17.

Still another way to organize your prayer time is to follow the acronym ACTS, spending a few moments doing each of the following:

Adoration

Confession of sin

Thanksgiving

Supplication

Talking to God is an important part of the Christian life. Discuss with your parents ways you can pray, either by yourself or as a family.

Write down one idea from this discussion:

- C. **Worshipping God with His People.** Read Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10

Before Jesus came into the world, people followed the seasons and practices of worship of the Old Testament. After Jesus came, the purposes of these practices were fulfilled (Colossians 2:16-17). His

disciples often met on the first day of the week, referred to in the Bible as the Lord's Day. This corresponds with the day we call Sunday. They did this to praise God and honor the day Jesus was raised from the dead. By the end of the first century, worshiping God on this day had become the common practice of Christians. We worship God as an expression of our gratitude for all that He has done for us.

D. Spending Time with God's People Read Hebrews 10:19-25

As we go through life we experience times of joy as well as times of sadness. One important thing we can do is to gather with other Christians for mutual encouragement, strength, and growth. This helps us as well as others. To neglect this is to disobey God's Word, lose opportunities to minister to others, as well as lose opportunities to be ministered to.

E. Sharing the Good News of Eternal Life

Saint Francis of Assisi lived many years ago. He understood an important truth about sharing the good news of eternal life. He said, "Preach the gospel (good news of eternal life) at all times, and when necessary, use words." What he is saying is that the way we live our lives tells people about what we believe and where our hope is. We want to live in such a way that other people can see the love of Jesus at work in our heart. We will also have opportunities to tell people about what we believe. The better we understand the good news, the better we can share it with others. Who among your family or friends do you want to share the good news of eternal life? Talk about this with your parents and write the name of someone for whom you can pray, asking God to give you the joy of sharing the good news with them: _____ . Sharing the good news is a great way to be encouraged in your faith.

III. Summary

We see in the Bible that God's people gathered together to worship, share their possessions, partake of the Lord's Supper, and encourage one another. We also find that God is available for us to talk to in prayer. He has also

given us His Word which is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105). If we are to grow into mature Christians, we need to seek to follow God's ways to maturity, so we will not be like the Corinthians, to whom Paul wrote, "I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly-mere infants in Christ" (I Corinthians 3:1).

Student's
Guide
Section Two:
Understanding What We Do at
Christ Community Church



Section Two, Lesson One Special Emphases in Our Church

I. Our Target Attitude

Read Philippians 2:5-8

At Christ Community, we want to strive for an attitude of humility. The Bible says that our attitude should be the same as that of Jesus, who was willing to place others before Himself. That is what humility is all about. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. Just as a target is something you shoot at-but don't always hit, we recognize that there will be times when we don't hit the target of humility. When we miss we need to tell God we are sorry and ask for His forgiveness. Thankfully, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins! An attitude of humility will help us have the right emphases as we try to live as Christians.

II. What We Want to Emphasize

A. The Bible is God's Word Read II Timothy 3:14-17

God has made sure that we can know what He is like, what we are to believe about Him, and how we should live our lives. He has done this by providing us the Bible. A long time ago God used His Spirit to move men to write letters, histories, poems, prophecies and gospels. These writings have been gathered together in what we call the Bible. The Bible is our final source of authority and information about God. From II Timothy 3:16, we learn that the Bible is useful for _____, _____, _____, and _____ in righteousness.

B. Core Message of the Bible: the Gospel Read 1st Cor. 9:19-23

There are many things the Bible teaches about what we need to do and how we need to live. But not everything the Bible teaches us needs to be emphasized in the same way. The central message of the Bible, that a relationship with God is possible for everyone who believes God's message, is what we need to have as our central concern. We should not be distracted by what people wear, eat, or drive. We should not spend our time in

useless arguments about things that the Bible does not focus on. We want to help people know about having a relationship with God more than anything else.

C. Jesus' Concern for Unity Read John 17:20-23

Jesus is very concerned that those people who are in His family love and respect one another. In fact, He is so concerned that before He died on the cross, He prayed for those who would believe in Him; that we would be one. This does not mean that every Christian must belong to the same church, but that we would have spiritual unity. We do this with Christians from around the world by recognizing that all who entrust themselves to God through Jesus by faith belong to the same spiritual family. We do this in our local church by placing others before ourselves, something the Bible refers to as dying to self (see I Corinthians 13:1-7). What is a way you can practice putting others before yourself at Christ Community?

D. Peter's Concern for Growing in Maturity Read I Peter 1:13-2:3

When we are first born as babies, we are very helpless. We need others to care for, feed, and love us as we grow. The goal is for us to grow into a mature person who is able to care for themselves. The same is true for Christians. When we are born into God's family we need a lot of love and attention to grow. But the goal is that we grow into mature Christians who can help others grow as well. We do this by praying to God, reading and studying God's Bible, and being taught by those who are more mature than we are. Think back to Section One, Lesson Four. What were the five things listed under "Ways to Grow?"

Talk with your parents about what things you can be doing to make sure you are growing toward maturity.

E. Our True Enemy Read Ephesians 6:10-18

The Bible teaches that there is a physical world and a spiritual world. The physical world is made up of all these things we see around us—rocks, trees, seas, plants, and so on. But even though we don't see the spiritual world, it is just as real as the physical world. Our enemy, the devil, is a spiritual being. He was once a great angel in God's heaven, but he rebelled against God and now hates God and all who follow Him. Even though the devil is powerful, he is not more powerful than God. In fact, the Bible teaches that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7). The primary way we resist the devil is by trusting God's Word. As believers who have God's Spirit, we have the promise that greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world. By recognizing our true enemy, we are able to remember that other Christians with whom we have differences are not our enemy.

Section Two, Lesson Two

God's Covenant Community

I. God's Covenant with His People Read Genesis 15:18, 17:1-2

When God calls people into relationship with Himself, He calls this a covenant. A covenant is a bond in which both sides have responsibilities. This bond is not supposed to be broken. God promises over and over that He will keep the promises He made when He promised Abram that He would make Him the father of a great nation. In the Old Testament this began with Abram's family, which later became the nation of Israel. When Jesus came, He re-instituted God's covenant (Luke 22:20), replacing the signs He used in the Old Testament (circumcision and the Passover) with new signs (baptism and the Lord's Supper). The visible form of His covenant community has also changed. Instead of a physical, national expression of the descendants of Abraham, we have a spiritual, international expression, called the Church (Galatians 3:26-29).

II. Signs Pointing Us to God's Promises

We have signs all around us. If you were riding in a car and wanted a hamburger and came to a sign for McDonald's, you would not ask the driver to stop the car at the sign on the side of the road! That's not where you find the promise of the hamburger—you find the hamburger at McDonald's, not the sign. In the same way, God has given us signs that point us toward the things we can only get from Him. These signs are important because they point us to His promises of having a relationship with Him, of His willingness to make us clean, of His desire to forgive us and be with us in life. The two signs God has given us are the signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Sometimes we call these sacraments, which reminds us that these are very important events; sometimes they are called ordinances, which reminds us that Jesus ordained (instituted) these activities.

A. The Sign of Baptism Read Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:39

Jesus tells us that as we go through life we are to make disciples by teaching them about Him. When people say they

want to follow Jesus and become a member of His Church, we are to place the sign of baptism on them, using water, and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The water symbolizes the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit. The sign reminds us of God's promises to have a relationship with those who look to Him in faith.

In gathering a people to Himself, God chooses to work in many ways. One of the most encouraging ways He works is through families. Just as God made promises in the Old Testament to work through families (Genesis 17:7), so He continues to work in the new covenant in Christ. This is why we not only baptize adults who become members of the Church, but also their children. Because of the faith of their parents, children are heirs of the promises of God (not heirs of salvation). When a child is old enough to understand the good news of the Bible, he/she will confirm the promises pointed to in their baptism by making their own profession of faith. Baptism is the sign of God's covenant that sets believing families apart from unbelieving families. It is sometimes referred to as the sign of initiation.

B. The Sign of the Lord's Supper Read I Corinthians 11:23-32

The Lord's Supper points us to God's covenant promises and His desire to bring us to Himself, as well as the way He makes this possible through Jesus' death on the cross. It reminds us that He is on our side and we can come to Him for forgiveness, comfort, and wisdom. When we look to God in faith, we are encouraged as we see how this event points us to God's love through Jesus. The bread we eat reminds us that Jesus was willing to allow His body to be broken for us; the cup we drink reminds us of the new covenant we enter into because Jesus' blood was shed on the cross. The Lord's Supper is sometimes referred to as the sign of continuation, since we partake of this as we continue to live the Christian life.

In our union with Jesus through faith, we are also united with His body, the Church. This is why the Bible teaches that those

who cause disunity within the Church should first turn away from such divisiveness and repent before taking the Lord's Supper. It is also why those who are holding on to things that are wrong (like sinful attitudes, thoughts, or actions) should also repent—to God and even people they have offended—before coming to the Lord's Table.

III. Review

A. What are two other names for the signs God gives us of His covenant?

_____, _____.

B. What are the signs of the new covenant? _____,

_____.

C. Which two signs from the Old Testament did these replace?

_____, _____.

D. Who belongs to the physical expression of God's people, the Church, and should receive the sign of initiation into the covenant?

E. Are infants and young children who are baptized automatically made into Christians?

Section Two, Lesson Three

Standards for Communing Members

I. Living in Community

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

As someone who belongs to Jesus, you will want to live to please Him. We do not live to please Him so He will love us—we do this because He has already loved us! In other words, our lives are lived in response to what God has done for us. As we live in relationship with other Christians in the Church, there are things we need to do that will help us “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

A. Helping Ourselves

We have already mentioned some things we can do to help ourselves live in the right way. For example:

Routine time alone with God.

Obedience to the _____ of Scripture.

Regular partaking of the sacraments.

Consistent _____ with believers.

B. Helping Promote Unity

Any time we are around others there is always the possibility that there will be misunderstanding, poor communication, and even disagreements. There are some things you can do to help these from becoming problems:

Acting in love toward other members. **(Ephesians 4:2)**

Go directly to those with whom a problem. **(Matthew 18:15)**

Seek the assistance of a parent, guardian, teacher, or other person your parents direct you to if the issue cannot be resolved in _____. **(Matthew 18:16)**

Through your parents, seek the assistance of the _____ of the church if the issue still cannot be resolved. **(Matthew 18:17)**

Refuse to _____. **(1st Timothy 5:13; Proverbs 17:9)**
Before you speak, ask yourself, (1) "Would I say the same thing if the person I am speaking about were present?" and (2) "Will what I am saying build up the other person?"

C. Helping Build a Healthy Church

Christians support the Church by _____ their time, energy, and _____ with other believers. In other words, we are involved in the local church through regular involvement in worship, participation in ministry, and providing monetary resources for the work of the church. Here are some commitments that help you do this:

Faithful _____ .

Utilizing your spiritual gifts.

_____ for the leadership and ministry of the church.

Tithing to undergird the expansion of the Kingdom.

The tithe is God's gift to his Church to provide for the expansion of the gospel, works of love and mercy, and to combat self-centeredness, consumerism, and worldliness in His people:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test Me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates

of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Malachi 3:10
Contributions above the amount of the tithe are called offerings.

II. Living for God's Glory

Read I Corinthians 10:31

The Bible reminds us that if we belong to God, He has the right to place requirements on us for how we live and think. When we follow Jesus' teaching with a cheerful spirit, we bring honor to God. This is how we live to His glory. As you complete this workbook, take a moment and pray, asking God to give you the wisdom, desire, and ability to live for His glory in your personal life, family, school, in your other activities, and your Church

Student's Guide
Section Three:
Born Again



Born Again: Jesus and Nicodemus

- I. Review:** Romans 3:23, 6:23, John 3:16, and I John 1:8-9
- II. A Strange Conversation** **Read John 3:1-16**
- A. When did Nicodemus come to see Jesus? (verse 2)

 - B. What kind of person did Nicodemus think Jesus was? (verse 2)

 - C. When Nicodemus started talking about God, how did Jesus respond? (verse 3)

 - D. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, did Nicodemus understand? (verse 4)

 - E. When Jesus talks about being born again, what does He mean? (verse 5)

 - F. If we must be "born again," does that mean we are a Christian because our parents are Christians? (verse 6)

 - G. Who makes us "born again"? (verse 7)

 - H. What must we do to be born again, from above, by the Spirit? (verse 16)
- III. Final Review and Test**