

Let's
EXPLORE
Baptist
BELIEFS

A Children's Guide
to Basic Biblical Teachings

Leader's Guide

by

Johnnie Human

UPDATED EDITION

BAPTISTWAY PRESS®

Dallas, Texas

*Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs: A Children's Guide
to Basic Biblical Teachings—Leader's Guide (Updated Edition)*

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Preface

The Bible records incidents in the earthly ministry of Jesus that demonstrated Jesus' love and concern for children. He considered children very important. So should we. This book for children and the group leader's guide are based on the belief that children are very important indeed.

These materials are the product of Baptist cooperation. The Baptist Distinctives Committee/Texas Baptist Heritage Center recommended that materials be prepared for children that set forth basic Baptist beliefs. It was agreed that both a book for children and one for leaders of children's groups would be prepared.

Eugene Greer, volunteer Director for Projects and Research for the Baptist Distinctives Committee/Texas Baptist Heritage Center until his death in July of 2003, helped to get the project underway. Johnnie Human from Tennessee, a well-known and respected Baptist author for children, agreed to write the materials. Nelda Williams from Texas, an experienced leader in Baptist children's ministry, volunteered to assist in coordinating the project. Ross West from Georgia, an outstanding editor of Baptist publications, was secured to guide the publication process.

When the initial draft of the books had been prepared by Johnnie Human, Nelda Williams enlisted a number of children's workers in various churches in several states to "field test" the material and offer suggestions for improvements. The input from the field testing was incorporated by the author in the final draft. Doris Tinker, volunteer Director of Organization and Communication of the Baptist Distinctives Committee/Texas Baptist Heritage Center, provided excellent assistance in coordinating communication among the various people involved in the project and in editing the materials. She was aided in the process by Stephanie Tinker.

These materials will be better suited for most children in grades 3–6, but they contain suggestions for how creative teachers can adapt them for use with most children in grades 1–2. Those who have developed the material are aware of the wide age span of children in grades 1–6 as well as that there are differences in the spiritual development of children even of the same age. Ultimately it is hoped that material can be prepared for children on Baptist beliefs that will be much more directly related to specific ages and levels of spiritual development.

Finances for the project came from various sources including the James and Irene Landes Fund established by Ruth and Bill Pitts; the Prichard Family Foundation; High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation; Vester T. Hughes, Jr.; and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

These materials are sent forth with the prayer that they will help many children to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord, to grow in their Christian life, and to be active in their church.

WILLIAM M. PINSON, JR.
Executive Director Emeritus, Executive Board,
Baptist General Convention of Texas
Texas Baptist Heritage Center
Dallas, Texas 2004

Foreword

A Word to Pastors, Ministers of Education, and Children's Ministers

You are a key in helping children understand what the Bible teaches about basic Baptist beliefs. Your involvement in the use of *Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs* and this leader's guide is very important and appreciated.

Note that this study is prepared for children in grades 1–6. Although the material can best be utilized by children who read and who are in grades 3–6, suggestions are included for using the material with groups that include children who are not yet able to read and who are in grades 1–2.

Here are some suggestions on preparing to use these materials in your church:

1. Read through the children's book and the leader's guide to determine the following:

What children's group or groups will be selected to use the materials? The material is designed primarily for group study. For churches with large numbers of children, the groups might be formed around specific grades or ages of children. For churches with smaller numbers of children, the material contains suggestions for use with children from multiple grades and ages. The following are possibilities for the groups:

- In Sunday School for five to ten weeks, depending on the schedule and time provided in your church
- As part of a church study on Sunday or Wednesday evenings when both adult and children's curriculum materials could be used
- In a weekly family night program or other special gathering for children and adults
- As part of the Vacation Bible School curriculum
- In a summer camp program or retreat
- By parents of children in this age group who will not have an organized study group
- As the basis for a new member study for children who have recently been baptized and/or who are awaiting baptism

How much time will be allotted for each group session? If the time allotted for each session is less than an hour, you may want to provide two sessions for some of the chapters in order to have time to deal with each subject appropriately. Each chapter studies at least two different beliefs and is based on biblical teachings.

Who are the people you believe would be the very best to guide the children in this study?

Where are the best places for the meetings to take place if they are apart from regular Sunday School classes or Vacation Bible School gatherings?

How many groups and how many children in each group will be involved? This will determine how many of the books to order for the children and for the leaders.

2. Enlist the leaders for the groups of study. These may be Sunday School teachers, Vacation Bible School leaders, or individuals involved in other study groups.
3. Provide the leaders with copies of the children's book and the leader's guide. An order form is included at the end of this book.
4. Promote participation and attendance for the group meetings of the children, and encourage family members to be involved at home with the children in the study.
5. Hold a group meeting of all of the leaders to discuss the project, including its importance, the times and places of meetings, materials that will be needed, and suggestions on how to lead the groups of children in the study. The following section, "Ways to Use *Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs*," may provide a guide for such a session on how to use the materials.

Ways to Use *Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs*

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a journey of exploration with children that potentially will not only help them grow in Christ as Baptist Christians but will also enrich your own understanding of basic Baptist beliefs and practices. After all, nothing stimulates learning more than discussing such matters with inquisitive children, full of questions and enthusiasm.

Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs is a study prepared for children in grades 1–6. The material can be utilized best by children who read and by those in grades 3–6. Suggestions are included, however, for using the material with groups that include children who are not yet able to read and children who are in earlier grades.

The study materials include this book for use by children's leaders (*Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs—Leader's Guide*) and a workbook/activity book to be used by each child (*Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs*).

This five-chapter study is designed to establish a foundational understanding of beliefs important to Baptists and the Bible's teachings about these beliefs. The chapters and topics of study are as follows:

Chapter 1: God Is Always in Charge

- The Lordship of Christ
- The Authority of the Bible

Chapter 2: Three Gifts from God: Salvation, Security, Priesthood

- Salvation Only by Grace Through Faith
- Security of the Believer
- Priesthood of the Believer

Chapter 3: Symbols That Stand for Something Important

- Symbolic Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper—Church Membership

Chapter 4: We Decide How to Be a Church

- Church Autonomy
- Congregational Church Government
- Religious Freedom

Chapter 5: We Work Together to Tell the World About Jesus

- Missions/Evangelism
- Voluntary Cooperation Among Churches

Through this study, children will grow in their understanding of who Baptists are and what they believe. This study has been written to make it possible for young Christians to receive the foundation needed as they grow in their faith.

Each chapter in this book contains background information; verses giving the biblical basis for each belief; key verses for each belief; specific ways to prepare for each session; suggestions for leading the children in the study; and ideas for parents to use at home with their children.

The basic format for each chapter is as follows:

Chapter Title

Background for the Leader

Bible passages for each topic in the chapter

A brief discussion of each topic in the chapter

Preparing for the Session—ideas on how to prepare to lead the group on the topics

Leading the Session

BEGINNING—ideas on how to begin the group meeting

EXPLORING—ideas on ways to help the group understand the topics

CHALLENGING—ideas on ways to challenge the members of the group to apply what they have learned

Make sure that enough copies of the children's book have been ordered for each child in your group to have a copy, with a few extra for those who may lose theirs.

In the children's book you will find **Learning Activities** that are suggested for use in each session. Activities for younger children who have not yet learned to read are also included in teaching procedures. Teachers will need to plan to help non-readers by assigning a teacher or an older child to help them with the activities as needed.

As you prepare to lead this study, become familiar with the beliefs to be studied in each session. You will want to adapt the material to fit the needs and interests of the children in the group.

Study carefully the pages in the children's book that are available to use each session. Be sure to plan for children to be actively involved in the activities. This will help them in understanding each belief. Work each of the projects in the children's book to make certain that you know how to do it and will be able to guide the children.

Ways to Use *Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs*

In addition to this book and the children's book, you will need to make available these materials for use in each session:

- Bibles
- pencil or pen for each child
- newsprint and markers or chalk and chalkboard
- other materials as suggested for use with the **Learning Activities**

Also, you may want to obtain additional materials on Baptist beliefs and practices to aid you in your discussions with the children. Your church library may have such materials. Here are some places you can contact for resources that you might order:

BAPTISTWAY PRESS, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 333 North Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246; Phone—1.866.249.1799; FAX—214.828.5187; or E-mail—baptistway@bgct.org. (See also www.baptistwaypress.org.)

Baptist History and Heritage Society, 3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30341; Phone—678-547-6095; FAX—678-547-6096; or E-mail—bhhs@baptisthistory.org (See also www.baptisthistory.org.)

You may want to encourage the families of the children in your group to obtain materials from your church library or the resources listed above to use with children at home.

Encourage the children at the conclusion of each session to take their books home and involve their family in the activities suggested for use at home. Remind them to bring their books back for the next session!

Suggested Resource Materials for *Let's Explore Baptist Beliefs*

Beck, Rosalie, and others. *Beliefs Important to Baptists*. Dallas: BAPTISTWAY PRESS, 2001. A biblically-based study of basic Baptist beliefs. Order from BAPTISTWAY, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246. See above for more information on ordering.

Estep, William R. *Why Baptists?* Dallas: Baptist Distinctives Committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1997. A brief book tracing the historical and biblical roots of Baptist beliefs and practices.

Hobbs, Herschel H. *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Revised edition. Nashville: Convention Press, 1971. A study of the Baptist Faith and Message, 1963, providing excellent biblical and historical insights. Out of print, but copies can be found in the libraries of many Baptist churches and Baptist schools.

McBeth, H. Leon. *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987. A thorough, well-documented historical resource of the beliefs and practices of Baptists throughout the world.

_____. *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990. A book of primary resources such as letters, pamphlets, confessions of faith, books, and other documents of Baptists.

God Is Always in Charge

Background for the Leader

The Lordship of Christ	The Authority of the Bible
<p>Summary: Jesus is Lord of all. Christians are to do what Jesus says. Jesus has the power and control over everything in earth and in heaven.</p>	<p>Summary: God used people to write the Bible. God inspired them to know what to write. The Bible is the guide for Christians to know how to be saved, what to believe, and how to live.</p>
<p>Biblical Basis: Matthew 16:13–16; John 1:1–5, 14; 10:30–38; 20:28; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 2:9; Revelation 5:1–14</p>	<p>Biblical Basis: Psalm 119:11, 97–112; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21</p>
<p>Key Verse: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10–11)</p>	<p>Key Verse: But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)</p>

Baptists Believe Jesus Is Lord

Read the story in Matthew 16:13–16 of a time Jesus talked to his disciples about who he was.

One day Jesus paused to talk to his disciples. Jesus knew that the time for him to die on the cross to provide salvation from sin was drawing near. Jesus had done his best to teach his followers who he was and what he had come to do. That day Jesus asked his disciples what people were saying about who he was. The disciples told Jesus that some people thought Jesus was John the Baptist who had come back from the dead (Matthew 16:14). The disciples said that others believed Jesus to be Elijah. Malachi 4:5 had prophesied that Elijah would precede and prepare the way for the Messiah. Some thought Jesus was Jeremiah or one of the other prophets who had come back to earth.

Then Jesus asked his followers (Matt. 16:15), “Who do you say I am?”

Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16). Peter understood that Jesus was God.

The belief that Jesus is Lord was important to early Christians. That belief is important to Baptists today. Early Christians taught that to be saved one must confess that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9).

If we believe Jesus is Lord, how will we live?

- We will become servants of Jesus.
- We will make Jesus the master of our money, time, and talents.
- We will let Jesus lead us to help other people.
- We will tell others what it means to make Jesus Lord.

Members of Baptist churches are people who believe that Jesus should be Lord of their lives. Baptists believe that only Jesus is to be Lord of the church, just as Jesus is to be Lord of each Christian.

Jesus is Lord now. He has overcome sin and death. But not everyone accepts Jesus as ruler. Many people go on acting as if Jesus does not matter. Jesus gives every person the right to choose. One day Jesus’ lordship will be known by all—the day when Jesus returns to earth and judges all people.

Baptist Beliefs About the Bible

Baptists base their beliefs on what the Bible says. The Bible is the only written authority for Baptist beliefs and practice. Baptists accept the Bible as the written record of God’s message to people (2 Timothy 3:16). God inspired the writers and guided them as they wrote what God wanted people to know.

Baptist beliefs come from the Bible. Baptists believe the Bible is authoritative for knowing how to be saved, how to behave, and what to believe. The Bible tells what is right and what is wrong. The Bible guides believers in knowing how to live daily. The Bible will instruct a church in the work the church needs to do.

The Old Testament tells the story of how God prepared the people for the coming of Jesus. God chose the people of Israel as God’s special people. God expected them to share their understanding of God with others. Four books called the Gospels tell us about Jesus’ life on earth and what Jesus taught. Other New Testament books contain writings that God led people to write to give direction to people and churches.

Baptists believe the Bible is a guidebook for knowing how to become a Christian (John 20:31). Baptists believe that every person has the right to read the Bible for himself or herself. A Baptist reads the Bible and asks the Holy Spirit for help in finding truth.

Baptists use the Bible as a guidebook, but they do not worship the Bible. They worship the Lord whom the Bible makes known. The Bible tells Jesus' followers what to believe, how to be saved, and how to live.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Preparing for the Session ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

- Pray that each child in the group will understand the teachings in this chapter, will trust in Jesus as Lord, and will appreciate the Bible as his or her guidebook.
- Read and reflect on how you will use the material for this chapter. If, because of time constraints, you cannot use all of the suggestions in “Beginning” and “Exploring,” choose the activities you feel are most important for the children in the group. Suggest that children do the activities in their books during the week in the **Learning Activities** that were not included in your session.
- Consider your goals. In this session, children can learn about these two Baptist beliefs: (1) Jesus came to be Lord of all and (2) the Bible is the source to determine what we believe and how we act.
- Determine the activities that will best meet the needs of the particular children in your group. Plan ways non-readers can do the activities in the **Learning Activities**. One idea would be for a non-reader to partner with a reader.
- Reflect on the Bible passages. Read the Bible passages on the Lordship of Christ and on the Bible as the authority for Baptist beliefs and practices. Reflect on your personal response to these beliefs. What are ways that believing Jesus is Lord makes a difference in how you relate to others? What difference does reading the Bible make in your faith and practice?
- Complete the **Learning Activities** you will be using in this session so you can guide children as they do their work. Remember to adapt material for any non-readers in your group.
- Remember to have paper, pencils, pens, or markers for **Learning Activity 7**.



Leading the Session



Beginning

1. **Start with music.** Tell children that since one of our beliefs in this study is about Jesus, you will begin with a song about Jesus. Enlist someone to play on the piano (or play a CD or a cassette) a song that has Jesus in the title, such as “Fairest Lord Jesus,” “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” or “Jesus Loves Me.” Ask, *If someone wanted to know who Jesus is, what would be your answer?* Share ideas in **Learning Activity 1** in the children’s book.

Exploring

2. **Discover what Baptists believe.** Lead children to turn to **Learning Activity 2** for a list of Baptist beliefs that will be included in this study. Provide time and give guidance as children search in the puzzle on “What Do Baptists Believe?” for words to complete the statements. (*Answers to the puzzle:* Lord, guide, faith, forever, salvation, members, work, church, Great Commission, gospel, choose, himself, herself, worship.)
3. **Discover the meaning of the word Lord.** Lead children to look in chapter 1 in their books to discover the meaning of the word *Lord* (**Learning Activity 1**). Use **Learning Activity 3** to help children learn reasons Jesus has the right to be called Lord. Lead them to unscramble the words and decide where each word fits in the statements about Jesus. (*Answer words are:* authority, created, believe, God, loves.)
4. **Do Learning Activity 4.** Ask children to circle puzzle words that tell places Jesus is Lord of their lives. (*Answer words are:* homes, play, church, school, family.) Lead children to draw a box around puzzle words that tell ways to show Jesus is Lord of their lives. (*Answer words are:* honoring, loving, giving, serving, choosing.)
5. **Explore Bible passages about who Jesus is.** Lead children to turn to Matthew 16:13–16 in their Bibles. Explain that this event happened near the end of Jesus’ ministry. By that time people everywhere were aware of Jesus’ teaching and healing and doing miracles. Invite someone to read aloud Matthew 16:13–16 as others read silently. Or, do an impromptu drama by asking one child to be Jesus and all other children to be disciples as they act out the event.
6. **Ask questions to increase learning.** Ask, *Who did people think Jesus was? Why do you think they thought Jesus was one of those people?* Suggest to children

that people perhaps knew no other way to explain the wonderful things Jesus did because the only others they knew about who had done similar things were the ones they named. Suggest that when people decide to trust in Jesus, it does not matter what others say. What matters is what each person believes about Jesus.

7. **Introduce what Baptists believe about the Bible as our authority.** Enlist two boys to read the conversation between Alberto and Jeff in “The Bible Is Our Authority” in **Learning Activity 5**. Ask, *What had Jeff learned about the Bible?* (It helps us know how God wants us to act.) Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17 to the children.
8. **Use the activity in Learning Activity 6 to find four statements about what Baptists believe the Bible tells us.** Lead children to follow the directions for completing the puzzle with four statements at the bottom of the activity. (*Answers are:* What to believe to become a Christian; Everyone can read the Bible for himself or herself; What is right and what is wrong; Baptists need no other written guide but the Bible.)
9. **Suggest that since the Bible is our written authority for knowing how to behave or act, let us think of situations when you could be helped by knowing a Bible verse.** Lead children to do the activity in **Learning Activity 7** by matching to each situation listed a Bible verse that would help them decide what to do. Place each non-reader as a partner with a reader to do these activities. (*Answers:* **1.** Psalm 56:3; **2.** Acts 20:35; **3.** Matthew 18:21–22; **4.** Luke 6:27; **5.** Philippians 4:13; **6.** Ephesians 4:32.) Lead each child to choose one of the other activities suggested in **Learning Activity 7**. Invite children to tell of times when the Bible helped them learn how to act in a situation.

Challenging

10. **Talk about ways to show that Jesus is Lord of your life.** Ask: *What is one special thing you will do this week to demonstrate that you understand what it means to make Jesus Lord of your life?* (Ideas: invite someone to go with you to a church activity; give at least ten percent of money you receive to your church; make a choice to do something you know Jesus wants you to do, even though you might prefer to do something else.) Invite children to share their ideas.
11. **Discuss ways to show appreciation for the Bible.** Say: *God gave us a wonderful book called the Bible. How can we show we appreciate the Bible and want to learn more about what it contains?* (Ideas: Learn to say the books of the Bible; learn three new verses from the Bible that will help you know how to act; attend Sunday School every week and listen as your teachers share important Bible truths.)
12. **Pray.** Ask each child who is willing to do so to pray aloud for help in using the Bible in following Jesus as Lord this week.