

Leading
YOUR CHILD
to Christ





INTRODUCTION

We are so excited about this opportunity to share with you about leading your child to Christ and are grateful you have a desire to raise your kids to follow Him!

So often, one of the hardest questions to answer regarding your child's spiritual journey is how to help them get started and be sure they understand what they are doing. As parents, we often have a deep-down fear that what we do and how we do it may not be enough to lead our own kids to a genuine relationship with Christ. We hope this simple tool will help answer these common questions as we partner together to reach our kids for Christ.

IS MY CHILD CAPABLE OF ACCEPTING CHRIST?

One of the most common questions parents have is if their child is old enough to accept Christ. Biblically speaking there isn't a specific age mentioned as to when a child is ready to make a commitment to the Lord. Some kids as young as five make strong statements about their commitments to Christ, and other kids wait until they are in their older elementary years or even later! Often, they can answer questions about, and even explain, the basic concepts of salvation about their sin separating them from God, Jesus dying on the cross for their sins, and their need a relationship with Christ to go to heaven. Understanding these basic concepts is typically the first step towards a relationship with Christ, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are ready to make a lifetime commitment. However, any questions

that your child asks are important and a could be a signal that the Holy Spirit is moving.

Ultimately, we do have to trust the Holy Spirit to make the time of salvation apparent to our child with as little of our own interference as possible. Our role as parents is to guide them and not persuade them one way or another.

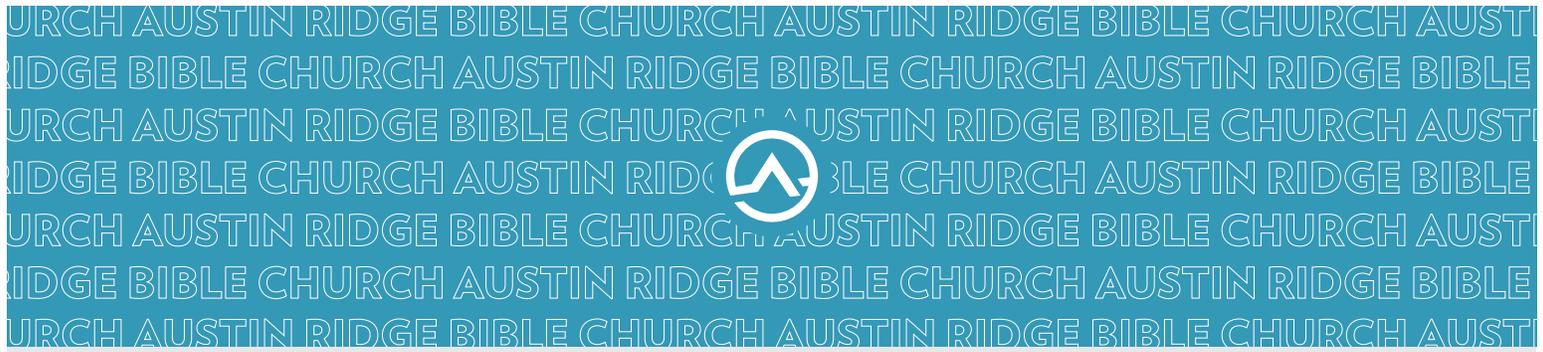
DO I NEED A PASTOR TO LEAD MY CHILD TO CHRIST?

Sometimes it can be a struggle when we think about how to talk to our kids about salvation. It's easy to feel inadequate – this is the biggest decision of our child's life, and we don't want to leave something out or say something wrong! Yet God wants nothing more than for YOU to share in this process and to lead your child to Christ. Yes, he wants YOU to lead them!

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Moses talks to the people and says...

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV)

Our job as a parent is first to love God with all our heart, soul, and might. Our kids getting to see us love God and put Him first will speak more strongly than the most eloquent words we could ever come up with.



The second part says we are to teach our children to do the same. As parents, WE are responsible for the spiritual maturation of our kids. There is no one else in the Bible given the specific job of teaching our children how to love God.

You have a huge task, but the church, other family members, and friends are there to help in the process. It may seem daunting, but you are not alone.

Never forget, salvation is a work of God not of man. Trust God with your kids and trust God through the journey!

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN MY KIDS ARE TRULY READY?

Questions and persistence!

Kids are inquisitive, and they love to ask us questions. I'm sure many of you would identify with me in that there are sometimes so many questions that I wish I could hit the mute button for a few minutes! However, when it comes to salvation, the greatest thing you can do is to listen and respond to the questions they are asking. Examples of some of the first questions are: "How do I get to heaven?" or "I saw my friend get baptized. I want to do that. Can I get baptized?"

At this stage, we should answer the child's questions in a factual way without any gasps of emotions or assumptions about a decision. We don't want our children looking back years from now and realizing that a simple question turned into a commitment they didn't fully understand. Answers like,

"We get to heaven by having a relationship with Jesus. You'll be learning a lot about what that means as you get older. It's so exciting that the God of the universe wants a relationship with us!" or, "Daniel felt like he was ready to let God make all the decisions about his life. He got baptized to show that he was on God's team. Everyone is ready to be baptized at a different time, and God will let you know when it's time for you to make that decision."

Simply answer whatever question your child raises. They may repeat the same questions over and over – even when they know the answers! This is normal, and it is simply a child's way of processing the information to get it straight. By allowing them to initiate these conversations instead of letting our excitement rush the process, the child can process their own experience, and it becomes personal to them.

If you don't know the answer to a question your child asks, just say, "I don't know, but I'll find out." It is never wrong to tell them you don't know. They need to understand you are continually growing in your own understanding and relationship with Christ.

The next stage to look for in your child is how often they are bringing up the subject of salvation. Children who are ready will tell you. Not only will they tell you, but they will also hound you. The increase in the frequency and intensity of their questions could be a sign that the Holy Spirit is prompting them. Waiting on them to recognize their own need for salvation and a relationship with God is far more meaningful than us telling them of their need.



AN EXAMPLE

My daughter started to ask questions when she was five, but she would ask the question, get her answer, and then go play. A year of her sporadic questioning went by, and then in the month of November, she was adamant about wanting to accept Christ. We walked her through some basic questions to see if she understood, and of course she could answer these easily. But then my wife explained to her that when she started a relationship with Christ, it wasn't simply about "going to heaven." A relationship with God meant that she would let God have control of every decision she would make in her entire life.

We explained that this was best because God is the only one that knows what will happen in the future, so letting Him direct our choices was the best thing for us, and the only way for us to have true joy on earth. Our adamant, strong-willed daughter was now not so sure. She stated that she wasn't quite ready for that yet, and she ended the conversation.

A few weeks passed with some more intense conversations, and finally she came to us again. This time she was positive that she was ready. We explained the seriousness of giving up control for the rest of our lives to Jesus, but this time she understood as much as a six-year-old could. She of course doesn't know what it's like to have to move because God calls her to live somewhere else or to end a friendship because it isn't God honoring. But she understood as much as she could at her age, and she was still willing. By this point, we knew we couldn't delay her decision.

Just as we knew she was finally ready, through prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will

know when your child is ready too. You are your child's most important partner in the world, and you know your child better than anyone. You know when your child is serious about something and when they are not. Go with your gut! The Holy Spirit will let you know when your child is ready.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When talking to your kids about salvation, be sure to not pressure them. Many times, kids are seeking God and need to ask questions to discover who God is for themselves. When they begin to show interest walk them through this discussion:

1. Why do you want a relationship with Christ?

2. What is sin?

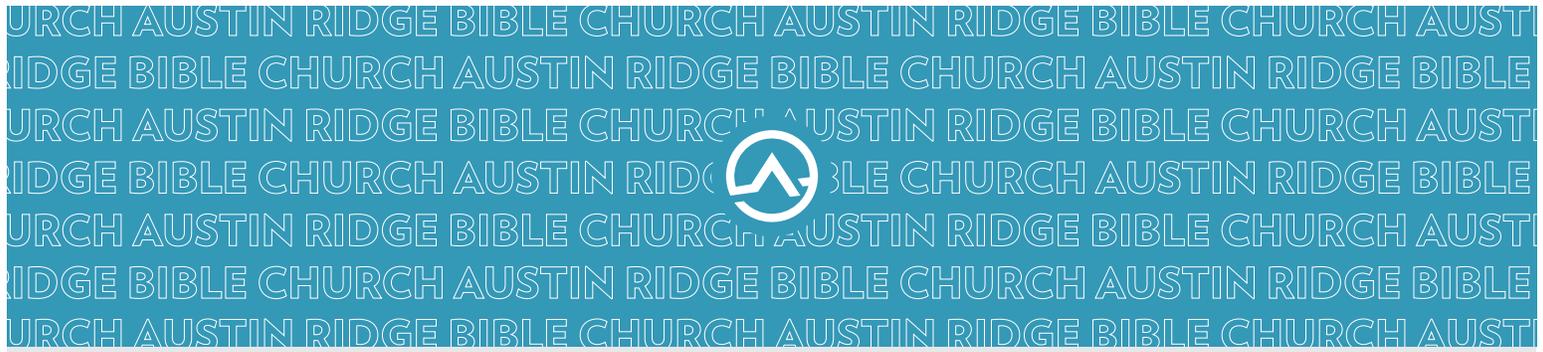
Sin is when we disobey God. Romans 3:23
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

3. What are some examples of sin?

Disobeying parents, lying, cheating stealing, etc. Kids need to understand what sin is for them to truly understand why they need a Savior. If they are not able to understand it's okay, remember it takes time and for some it takes more time than others.

4. What did Jesus do so that you could be forgiven of your sin?

Jesus lived a perfect life, He sacrificed Himself by dying on the cross, and three days later he rose again. Ephesians 2:8 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God."*



5. Do you believe Jesus did these things for you so that your sins can be wiped away?

Romans 10:10 *"For with your heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."*

We must stress to our children that just because we decide to follow God, we will continue to sin and disobey. It would be impossible to obey God in every single decision we make. Only Jesus never sinned. It's amazing that Jesus always told the truth, always obeyed His parents, always controlled His anger, never stole, and never did anything wrong!

This is a good time to point out and talk about specific areas of our own lives that we as parents struggle with. Share how you've learned to deal with anger or wanting what others have or having friends disappoint us. It should be our goal to show our children that a life of faith is one that is completely dependent on God's forgiveness each and every day. Christianity means we are working to look more and more like Christ as each year passes. Looking like Jesus is our goal because He is the one person that never sinned.

Take time to tell your child how significant this gift from Christ is to them. Jesus's perfect life – His being punished for everything He had never done – made His gift of death on the cross so much more precious to us. If Jesus had sinned when He lived on Earth, He would have been just like you and me. Instead, Jesus loves us and has a special plan for our lives. He was willing to die so that we could have that special life He planned for us. John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Finally, lead your child in this simple prayer. Have them repeat it out loud so you can hear their heart.

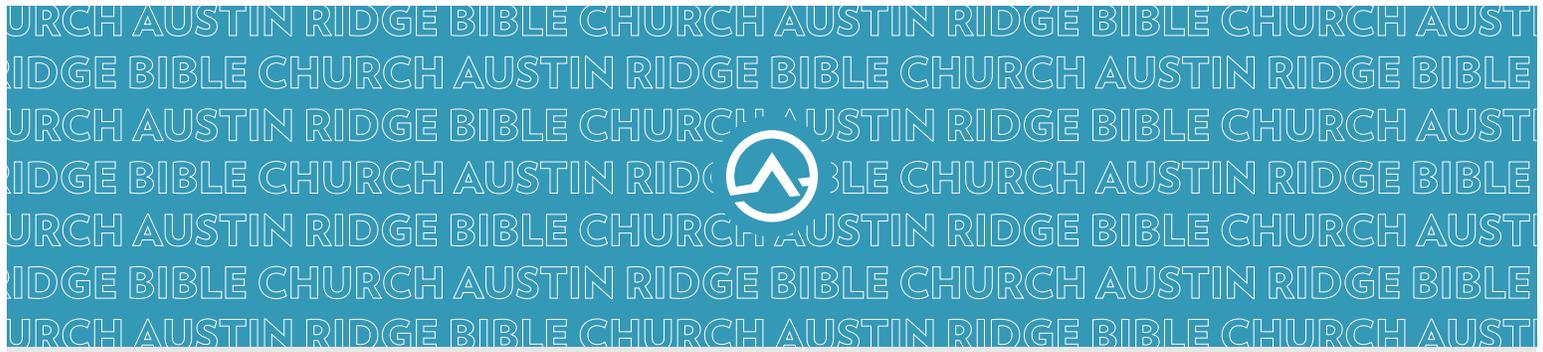
Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I have disobeyed you and today I want to put my hope and trust in you to forgive me of my sins. I believe that you died on the cross for me. Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross and taking the punishment for all the things I've done wrong. Help me to continue to grow in my relationship with you. I can't wait to see you in heaven someday. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Let your child know that God loves them, and their lives are now changed forever! Celebrate with your child and let them know how proud you are! Write the date down on a calendar, or enter it on your phone, and let your child know that you will be celebrating their spiritual birthday every year for the rest of their lives!

HOW CAN I PARTNER WITH MY CHURCH?

Once your child begins the salvation process, include your child's small group leader and Children's Pastor. They want to help guide you and be a resource for you during this important time in your child's spiritual development. They will also be able to pray with you and encourage you as a parent. This also allows your child to see the importance of their small group leader and Pastor in their own spiritual development.

At our church, we inform our small group leaders when a child is scheduled for baptism or when they have accepted Christ so they can celebrate as well. Many times it's a great teaching opportunity



in the small group time, not only for the leader, but especially for your child. We encourage kids at our church to personally tell their small group how they accepted Christ and why. The group then prays together. This process allows other kids to ask questions and even offers opportunities for other kids to begin the process of accepting Christ.

Lastly, if you have never made this decision for yourself, now is the perfect time to do that! Everything you have just told your child is true for you to!

WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?

There is a short video on our website that we would like you to watch that explains why we baptize, and what baptism is and is not. Please take a few minutes to review that video and read over the FAQ.

Never forget that following Christ is a marathon and not a sprint. Don't rush this process. Don't live in fear that you will get this wrong. God has placed you in the life of your child and he will guide you as you lead them to Jesus.



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AUSTIN RIDGE

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