

# THE GOSPEL @ GEYER

**GEYER SPRINGS  
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES**

# 1. THE BURDEN

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Believers should be burdened for the way that children are evangelized in churches today. There are unbiblical gospel presentations, happening in emotional environments, prompting children to “make a decision.” As a result, there are potentially many false converts on church membership roles (**Matthew 7:21-23, 13:24-30**). While many churches are sincere in trying to reach children with the gospel, we must remember that it is impossible to manufacture the Holy Spirit’s work (**John 3:8**).

Jesus is everyone’s greatest need regardless of their age. Due to this, kids should never be hindered in coming to faith in Christ (**Matthew 19:14**). On the other hand, children should not be manipulated into doing something that they do not understand. It is a terrifying thought to stand before the Lord guilty of either offense! The Gospel @ Geyer is designed to help Geyer Springs partner with families to evangelize kids while protecting the integrity of the gospel and the ordinance of baptism.

# 2. THE GOSPEL

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Everyone must answer the question, “What is the gospel?” The word “gospel” means “good news.” It is a non-negotiable doctrine. If you miss the gospel, you miss Heaven. The gospel has become distorted and centered upon the actions of man instead of the work of God. We only find the “good news” in its source, the Word of God (**Romans 10:14-17**). Here is an overview of some key areas of Scripture that point us towards the gospel. It all begins with...

- **God:** There is one true God (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). He is triune in nature (**2 Corinthians 13:14**). The Father, Son, and Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal. God is the creator and sustainer of all things (**Genesis 1:1**). On the 6th day of creation, God made...
- **Man:** God created all things for His glory. Man is different than any other creature that God made. God made man in His image (**Genesis 1:26-27**). God placed the first people, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 2:15**). Adam and Eve were

commanded to serve the Lord and to enjoy fellowship with Him. The problem was that they chose to...

- **Sin:** Adam and Eve rebelled against God (**Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6-7**). As a result, humanity fell and we are all sinners by nature (**Romans 3:23, 5:12**). Everyone disobeys God in what we think, say, and do. There is a lie that states man is inherently good, but the truth is that we are all totally depraved with sin (**Romans 3:10**). As a result of our sin, we deserve God's...

- **Penalty:** We deserve to be punished by God (**Romans 6:23**). God is just and we are owed His wrath for our rebellion against Him. The penalty of our sin is death and judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**). We face a physical death, but more costly is that we are spiritually dead in our sins (**Ephesians 2:1**). This will lead to an eternal death of conscious separation and punishment from God in hell (**Revelation 20:14-15**). We sinned against an infinitely, perfect God and owe Him a debt that we can never pay. This is why hell is eternal (**Matthew 25:46**). The plan to make atonement for sin was accomplished by...

- **Jesus:** Jesus was fully God and fully man (**John 1:14**). He lived a sinless life (**1 Peter 2:22**). Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies verifying Him as the Messiah (**Luke 24:27**). Jesus willingly died on the cross for our sins (**Romans 5:8**). The nails, the crown of thorns, the mocking, and the many other abuses Jesus experienced were excruciating (**Mark 15**). The most horrific portion for Christ was being punished by God as if He committed our sins (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). He was the substitute on the cross for us (**1 Peter 2:24**). The wrath that we deserved was poured out upon Jesus on the cross (**1 John 2:2**). Jesus died, He was buried, and rose again three days later conquering sin, death, Satan, and hell (**1 Corinthians 15:3**). It is this work of Christ that calls for a...

- **Response:** We cannot earn forgiveness through works (**Titus 3:5**). Salvation comes only through Jesus (**Acts 4:12**). We must repent of sin and believe upon Christ. Repentance means to turn away from sin and towards God. It is more than simply saying, "I am sorry, God." It is a change of mind, desire, and will concerning sin (**Acts 3:19**). Believing in Christ is more than just acknowledging His existence. The Bible says that even demons do this (**James**

**2:19).** It is placing your faith in Christ. It is fully trusting Who the Bible tells us Jesus is and what He did on the cross. It is surrendering all of ourselves to Christ as Lord (**Romans 10:9**). It is the work of God in us and our response that changes our...

- **Standing:** When the Holy Spirit helps us to repent and believe, we become brand new (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). It is through Jesus' death and life that our sins are paid by His sacrifice and His perfect obedience is given to us (**Romans 5:17**). We are now destined for Heaven (**1 Corinthians 5:8**)! We will still disobey God on earth, but our sins past, present, and future are forgiven (**Colossians 2:13**). The Holy Spirit indwells the believer at the point of salvation (**Ephesians 1:13-14**). We are not saved by our own works, but are saved to do good works. Our salvation is the root and our works are the fruit (**Ephesians 2:10**). Our salvation is completely secure as God is working to preserve us to the end (**John 10:27-30**). If a person turns completely away from the Lord or comfortably wallows in sin, we can assume that they were never saved (**1 John 2:19**).

## 3. TALKING TO CHILDREN

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There must be a balanced approach in talking to kids about the gospel. We must never push a child away from following Jesus. The Lord does bring salvation to children! God saves children just like He does anyone else. On the other hand, we cannot talk a child into the faith. This is the job of the Holy Spirit. Children will often want to respond positively to what they perceive an adult wants them to do. The following principles will help Geyer Springs and families prayerfully and patiently engage children in conversations about salvation.

- **Ask Open Ended Questions:** It is important to ask open ended questions. An open ended question requires more than a “yes” or “no” answer. For example, “Did Jesus die on the cross” is not an open ended question. When asked this question, most kids will reply, “yes,” which will not provide enough information to gauge their understanding. It is better to ask, “Why did Jesus die on the cross?” This helps kids to better process through the implications of the question. Here are some questions that are helpful to ask:

What is sin? Why is sin a big deal? Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus die on the cross? How can a person be saved? What happens to a person who dies that is not a Christian?

- **Use A Bible:** It is vital that kids see an open Bible in our conversations with them. God has revealed the truth to us in His Word. There is power in the Word of God (**Hebrews 4:12**)! It is through the Word of God that the Spirit of God does His work. There is nothing that we can say that is more important than what God has already said. Have children find the Bible verses and read them aloud. The passages in the previous section on the gospel are ideal reference points in conversations with children.

- **Avoid Unbiblical Language:** This might seem obvious, but it occurs often in witnessing to children. For example, phrases like “ask Jesus into your heart,” “say a prayer,” or “walk an aisle” are household phrases in evangelicalism, but are not rooted in Scripture. Instead, use strong biblical words like repent and believe.

- **Do Not Overcomplicate:** Children are saved just like anyone else. You could argue that an adult must become more like a child to be saved (**Matthew 18:3**). It is, however, important to consider the characteristics of kids when discussing the gospel with them. We cannot become so rigid to say that a child must be able to define theological words like “imputation,” “propitiation,” and “expiation” before coming to Christ. We do not expect a kid or anyone else to write a dissertation on salvation! A believer who has been saved for years experiences much joy in learning more about God’s work of salvation. The point is to explain the gospel in an age-appropriate manner while maintaining the use of biblical language.

- **Do Not Soften The Message:** We must not soften the hard parts of the gospel. When we do, we leave out crucial portions of the gospel. There is a temptation to gloss over difficult portions of the gospel message with kids. The issues of sin, judgment, and hell must be addressed. A person who comes to Christ must be aware of what the Bible says about being saved. We are quick to say, “I am saved.” This should spur us to ask, “What am I saved from?” We are saved from the wrath of God. Kids must be told this truth!

When addressing the harder parts of the message, be sure to guard against leveraging fear as the only appeal for a child to come to Christ.

- **Check Motives:** We must try to determine a child's motives. The good news is that we don't do this alone! God has given believers the Holy Spirit. Due to His residency in our lives, we can rely upon Him for discernment. Here is an example of pinpointing a motive in a child. The Lord's Supper trays pass by a family at church. The child asks, "Mom, why can't I have some?" The mother replies, "It's something only Christians can do. The child connects the dots and says, "Well, I want to become a Christian." This same conversation often happens with baptism being the motivating factor. These are external factors that can be used to share the gospel, but cannot be verified as God's work. We must be wearing sensitive, spiritual lenses, so that we can look for God's internal work in a child's soul.

- **Look For Persistency:** If a child can move away from a salvation conversation easily, then it may not be God's Spirit drawing them to faith. If God's Spirit is dealing with someone, you will often be able to see and feel His work. If God's Spirit is convicting a child, they will not be able to simply "let it go."

- **Encourage Regularly:** There will be times when a kid is not ready to receive Christ. There are other times that we are just not going to know. In either situation, it is important to continually encourage children in their positive responses towards the gospel. The child's interest in and questions about salvation could be the Lord preparing them to be converted.

- **Allow For Questions:** Allow chances for kids to ask questions. Do not be afraid of being asked a question that you do not know how to answer. There are solid resources to help you find the answer. The pastors at Geyer Springs are available to walk alongside families in this process. There are also some questions that we do not know the answer to because the Lord has chosen not to reveal it to us (**Deuteronomy 29:29**).

- **Allow The Child To Pray:** When a kid is ready to receive Christ, we may be tempted to "seal the deal" with a repetition of the "Sinner's Prayer." The "Sinner's Prayer," which is not in the Bible,

has turned into a superstitious mantra to repeat if you want to be saved. The result is that children grow up trusting the repetition of a prayer for their salvation instead of the finished work of Christ. We do come to Christ confessing our sins and committing to Him. If the Holy Spirit is dealing with a child, feel free to allow them to express repentance to and faith in the Lord in their own words.

- **Assure Carefully:** It can be tempting to gauge children's response to the gospel based upon something done externally. We must focus on the internals over the externals. We want kids to examine their faith in a healthy manner (**Philippians 2:12-13**). Please do not try to give man-made assurance of salvation to a child simply based upon an external response. The Holy Spirit is the One Who gives assurance to our salvation (**Romans 8:15-16**). We do have the blessing of seeing the signs of assurance through persevering faith and producing fruit.

- **Pray:** You cannot save anyone, ever, not even on your best day (**John 6:44**). There is only one thing worst than someone not being saved; it is them not being saved, but thinking that they have been. It is the Spirit of God working through His people sharing the gospel that draws people Christ. As you share the Word of God, pray that the Spirit of God opens the child's heart to respond in faith to the truth (**Acts 16:14**).

## 4. BAPTISM



It is important to understand the meaning and the mode of baptism. Baptism cannot save you. The Bible teaches a "believer's baptism," which means only those who have been saved can be baptized (**Acts 16:30-33**). Baptism is a public display symbolizing the work of Christ in an individual's life. It represents that a person has died to sin and been made new in Christ (**Colossians 2:12**). Baptism communicates how Christ accomplished salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection (**Romans 6:4**). The meaning of baptism influences the mode of baptism. Baptism is to be administered by immersion.

If we are not careful, baptism can confuse children. There are three reasons this occurs. First, Satan attempts to distort the clarity

and the accuracy of doctrine (**2 Corinthians 11:14**). Second, churches do not always differentiate clearly enough between the relationship of salvation and baptism. Finally, baptism is just intriguing to children. Kids can be tempted to take part in baptism for a variety of reasons. It may be to seek attention, it looks a fun thing to do, or to be like a friend who was baptized. Here are the requirements for a child to participate in the ordinance of baptism at Geyer Springs:

- **Receive Salvation:** Salvation precedes baptism. Thus, we do not do infant baptism at Geyer Springs. Does the child believe that Jesus is the Son of God Who died on the cross for sin, was buried, and rose again? Has the child repented of their sins and placed their faith in Christ? The reality is that, because of our ministry philosophy, we have the blessing of seeing a majority of kids converted at home under the care of their parents.

- **Bearing Fruit:** There is no urgency to rush a child into the baptistry. If the child has been saved, it will not wear off. It is important to take the time to examine a kid's life for spiritual fruit. Of course, when most kids come to faith in Christ, it is not as if they walked away from a number of grievous sins. There still should, however; be some visible change (**Matthew 3:8**). There is no doubt that if something has happened internally, it will display itself externally. The same fruit that is demonstrated in adults is displayed in kids. Be on the lookout for new fruit in their lives such as: growing obedience to Scripture, increasing dissatisfaction with sin, expanding desire for the things of the Lord, and a burden for those who are lost.

- **Give Grace:** It is tempting to think that a child is not saved because they are acting like a child! For example, the kid does not get what they want, and as a result, throws a temper tantrum. Our first thought is that a saved person would not behave that way. This may be true, but we must be careful about holding our children to standards that we do not require of ourselves. As adults, we get frustrated when we do not get our way, but we have learned to "manage our sin" better than kids. We know the consequences of throwing a tantrum and do not do so because of the temporal pain it causes. It is important to give grace appropriately as it has been given to us. Give attention to how a

child responds not if they sin, but when they sin. Saved people grieve over their sin against God and others.

- **Visit With A Pastoral Staff member:** Once a child professes Christ, the family needs to visit with a member of the Geyer Springs Pastoral Staff. These are not meetings to declare whether or not a child is saved. It does, however; provide an opportunity for the child to express their faith in Christ with a Pastoral Staff member in a conversational format. Pastoral Staff members converse with kids based upon the principles noted in a previous section. These meetings require at least one parent to be present and preferably both if possible. Please note, there are times when a Pastoral Staff member will prayerfully determine that a child is not ready to be baptized. Please remember that Pastoral Staff members will give an account to the Lord for protecting the ordinance of baptism in His church. The decision that is made is in the best interest of your child's spiritual development and the purity of the church.

- **Complete The First Steps Class:** The First Steps Class is the equivalent of the Geyer Springs' Discover Class for adults. The First Steps Class is a requirement for baptism and church membership. If a kid is new to Geyer Springs and has been saved and followed the Lord in baptism, they can attend the First Steps Class or the Discover Class (with parents) to complete church membership. The First Steps Class is offered 3 times per year: Spring Semester, Summer, and Fall Semester. This class is strategically scheduled 3 times to guard against rushing children to be baptized. When the class occurs, it takes place on a Sunday during Worship and Sunday School. During this time, the kids learn about assurance, baptism, Lord's Supper, and spiritual disciplines to grow as Christ followers. During the Sunday School hour, there is a session for parents of the children participating in the First Steps Class. This time focuses on parents shepherding the heart of the new believer in the Lord in their home.

- **Meet The Age Requirement:** There is no specific age in Scripture for an individual to be baptized. There is liberty among churches to utilize their own discretion regarding the timing of children's baptisms. There are some churches that place no age limits while others are much more stringent on the requirements. There are dangers in both hurrying children into the baptism and

hindering them in obedience to the Lord. As a result, Geyer Springs has established that a child must be at least 7 years old to be baptized. We realize that this may be a point of contention for some parents. The truth is that everyone has a line for baptism. The church simply requests grace for the line that the leadership has established. The desire is not to forbid anyone from baptism, but to provide time to examine the child's life to ensure that there is a validity to their faith before publicly displaying it.

- **Prepare And Share A Testimony:** This may seem daunting for a child to share a testimony before the church. We want to guard against two extremes that occur in kids' testimonies. First, they are completely unprepared and the gospel is not communicated. Second, they are so scripted that it is obvious the child had no part in preparing the testimony. If a person is ready to publicly declare their faith through believer's baptism, then the individual should be able to share about the salvation they received from the Lord. A testimony can be shared in one of the following ways:

- Live: A child can read their testimony before the church from the baptistry during the service.
- Video: A child can film their testimony in the Geyer Springs Studio to be aired during the service.
- Read: A child can choose someone to read their testimony before the church during the service. This could be a parent, family member, friend, Sunday School Teacher, etc.

The staff pastor administering the baptism will need to review a copy of the testimony one week prior to the baptism.

- **Schedule the Baptism:** Once a child becomes a candidate for baptism, parents can simply call the church office to finalize the plans for this special day. Parents will need to determine the "when," the "where," and the "who" when calling the church:

- When? What day do you want to do your child's baptism?
- Where? What service do you want your child's baptism to be?
- Who? Who do you prefer administers your child's baptism? If you request someone besides a Geyer Springs Pastor, approval is required.

Once all of the details are scheduled, the family will receive a letter with instructions about the baptism. Baptism is an act of obedience to Christ's command and an evangelistic opportunity that occurs when a kid publicly professes and declares their faith in Christ. This is an ideal opportunity to invite family and friends to encourage the child in the faith and to hear the gospel!

## 5. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Once a child is converted, there is a temptation to think the work is done, but in actuality it is just beginning. Salvation is entirely the work of God (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), but sanctification is us working with God to become more like Christ (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**). God has called parents to be the primary disciple makers of their children (**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**). Parents are instrumental in the sanctification of their children. The church is to be a supplement parents are already doing at home. Here are some important commitments to make in regards to family discipleship:

- **Strive For A Godly Home:** It cannot be stressed enough how crucial it is for parents to live in word and deed to the Bible before their children. Children must see parents that are the same people at home as they are at church and in the community. The Bible is clear that fathers are to shepherd their families by feeding, providing, and protecting. This is evident in two particular areas of the home: marriage and parenting. First, children will see a reflection of the gospel in their parent's marriage (**Ephesians 5:22-32**). Second, each instance of discipline is an opportunity to correct children towards the gospel (**Ephesians 6:1-4**).

- **Prioritize The Church:** A family's participation in the local church must be a priority (**Hebrews 10:25**). Families need to be actively present at church unless they are providentially hindered to do so. It is such a blessing to gather on the Lord's day, with the Lord's people, at the Lord's Table, and under the Lord's Word. The church provides children the opportunity to sit under gospel preaching and to experience intergenerational relationships.

- **Nurture In Spiritual Disciplines:** The church incrementally provides 9 months of new believer materials to children. There are

also additional resources available to assist children in developing spiritual disciplines. Parents take on the pivotal role of encouraging their children to personally prioritize and persevere in daily times in the Word and prayer.

- **Practice Family Worship:** Designating times of family worship honors the Lord and is a gift to children. This can happen through prayer, Bible study, singing, and catechisms. The church provides trusted resource recommendations to help families lead their home in the instruction of the Lord on a daily or weekly basis.

## 6. CONCLUSION



We pray that the Gospel @ Geyer will be a source of help and encouragement to families evangelizing and discipling their children. Here is some postscript to bring clarity to issues that might have come to mind reading through this content:

- The Lord has saved many people in spite of botched gospel presentations and manipulative invitations (**Philippians 1:15-18**). We are not saying if you came to Christ in one of these instances that you are not saved. Even though there are more biblical ways to engage children with the gospel, the Lord still brings about His work of salvation in the midst of human weakness and error.
- There are some people who know the exact time of their salvation. There are others that can define possible instances when their conversion occurred, but are not certain which one it might be. Regardless, people in both situations are brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not want to err by simply trusting a one time decision or by downplaying the moment of regeneration. It is not a profession of faith that saves, but the possession of it.
- We are not against all invitations. People must be called and invited to follow Christ. It must, however, be done in a God honoring way. Geyer Springs does not utilize an invitation to coerce a response from children. Here is an example of an invitation that has been utilized. The message of salvation is shared with children in a biblical and understandable manner. During the conclusion of the message, children are dismissed to

the next activity on the schedule. If children want to talk about following Christ, they are instructed to stay seated in an environment that has not been manipulated. A group of trained church staff/members visit with children in an accountable environment utilizing the principles noted in this document. Following conversations, children's parents are contacted.

- Fourth, as referenced, men are to be the spiritual leaders of the home (**1 Corinthians 11:3**). We are not saying that women cannot make a spiritual impact in the lives of children. In fact, mothers make a huge impact in the lives of kids at home and in the church due to God's design of them in creation (**2 Timothy 1:5**). There are situations when there is no father in the home or he is present, but derelict in his duties. In these situations, the mother will carry the spiritual burden. There may also be cases when the mother is not in the home. In either situation, the local church is a place where the Lord can provide additional godly influences for children.
- Please do not mistake this approach to child evangelism as passive. We share the gospel frequently with children, but trust the good work of God in salvation. God is sovereign in salvation, but people must respond in repentance and faith (**Acts 13:48, Romans 10:9**). These two truths are not at odds, but are in fact, friends.
- The Bible does not speak of an age of accountability. We believe that the souls of children are safe under the Lord to a point of culpability. We believe that an aborted baby, a small child that dies, or an individual with intellectual disabilities that passes would be graciously given salvation. This belief is consistent with the Lord's mercy extended in Scripture (**2 Samuel 12:21-23**).
- We are not advocating that if you follow the principles in this guide, your child will walk faithfully with Lord. There is no surety that this will be the case. The guarantee is that if we do nothing, we will contribute to the hardness of our children's hearts. There is too much at stake not to prioritize the spiritual lives in our children!

Finally, the Children's Ministry Staff is available to visit with families concerning salvation, baptism, or family discipleship. May the Lord bless Geyer Springs' gospel centered emphasis by bringing salvation to boys and girls for His glory!