



Faith Chest (Birth)
Discussion Guide Session Three

***Baptism/Infant Dedication—
Evangelical Covenant***

Warm-Up

(video segment 1:23/discussion time ____ minutes)

Discuss in your small group: Since last session, what have you done to deepen the spiritual atmosphere in your home? For example, did you have prayer or devotions with your spouse? What were the challenges you faced and what were the successes?



Legacy Point 1

The Evangelical Covenant Perspective

(video segment 11:56 minutes)

The Evangelical Church is a non-creedal church that is open to all Christians. Therefore, it is open to a variety of practices in regards to baptism. Parents have the option of either baptism or dedication for their infant.

1. Baptism: It is a sign or symbol of God's grace. The child is presented as part of a Christian family and also the family of God. Baptism symbolizes the parents' responsibility to raise the child in the church...to work, live and pray for the child's salvation. It also symbolizes the church's responsibility to support the parent(s) and child in growing up in the community of faith where the child will have every opportunity to choose faith as his/her way of living.
2. Infant Dedication: If a family chooses a believer's baptism for the child after he/she is old enough to make an informed commitment to Jesus Christ, they can have the infant dedicated. The parent(s) and church promise to raise the child in the faith and to live a Christian life in front of him/her. It is their responsibility to pray that this child will someday choose baptism for him/herself.

Both are a family experience where the child is presented to the Lord in the presence of the church that bless and pledge to give support to the family. This is an experience for the whole family of God.

Jesus commands us to baptize and make disciples:

In Matthew 28:19-20 he says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you to the end of the age."

The great commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. The great commandment and great commission are central in the Evangelical Covenant Church. Therefore, an infant dedication is one of the greatest responsibilities and privileges of a parent...To declare in the presence of God and the church that this child belongs to Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:3-5 says, "And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.'"

God loves children and gives us the privilege to love them as well.

Luke 18:15-17 says, "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

Jesus touched and blessed little children! Infant baptism or dedication can also be the touch of God.



Let's Talk About It:

(discussion time ____ minutes)

❖ What touches your heart when you see a baptism or infant dedication?



Legacy Point 2

What Does a Child Need Spiritually?

(video segment 8:29 minutes)

The qualities that endure into the next life are faith, hope and love. Every child needs to experience these both here and now.

1 Corinthians 13:12-13, *"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

1. A child needs to grow up in an environment of faith where faith is modeled where families believe in and worship God....where prayer is modeled and practiced. It is as natural as breathing...a part of life.
2. An environment of hope is also needed. The child needs to see that life has purpose and God is working for a greater and better purpose...God is in this life.
3. A child needs an environment of love above all else. How do you spell love? T-I-M-E!

Kids have spiritual needs and the parents, the primary caregivers, are responsible to meet those needs. But God is the senior partner in providing this environment of faith, hope and love.

Faith, hope and love flow from God. They are gifts just as baptism is. God helps parents meet these spiritual needs of a child.



Let's Talk About It:
(discussion time ____ minutes)

- ❖ What one thing do you spiritually want to give your child?



Legacy Point 3

The Ceremony of Baptism/Infant Dedication (video segment 9:09 minutes)

The baptism begins with a remembrance of Scripture about baptism. That is the command of Christ to make disciples and baptize. The baptism includes sprinkling or pouring of water over the child in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The infant dedication also begins with remembrance of Scripture...Jesus blessing the children. The child is held up before the Lord and dedicated to him.

In both ceremonies, parents promise before God and the church family to raise their child in the faith and to model the Christian faith before him/her. Sponsors also make these same promises.

In addition, the congregation promises to support the parents in raising the child in an environment of faith, hope and love.

Another option is for the parent(s) to also speak a blessing over the child at this ceremony. The Faith Chest is given as a symbol of investing in the treasure of that child's faith. Items of spiritual significance can be stored here.



Let's Talk About It:
(discussion time ____ minutes)

- ❖ **What words of blessing would you like to pray over your child?**
(See Appendix 1: *Create a Blessing for Your Child* and Appendix 2: *Blessing Script*)



Wrap-Up

(video segment 1:10 minutes)

Consider another session to meet with other families and assemble a Faith Chest for your child.

Invest in the treasure of faith in your child's life!

Closing Prayer: *(Form small groups again and encourage each person to pray for the following.)*
Ask God to bless your family's spirituality and your role in leading it.

Assignment:

Plan a blessing event...a time to build your child's faith chest and meet together to celebrate this new beginning in your child's spiritual life.

Where do you go from here?

You have seen how beneficial it is to be in conversation and prayer with other adults in a similar life stage. This might be a good time to start or join a small group.