

## Leading Community Members Toward Baptism

Up until now, the process for baptisms at Element entailed interested persons attending a class facilitated by Element staff/elders. While we will continue to offer this, we also want to empower Gospel Community leaders to walk their community members through the same process. We believe this is a perfect extension of the GC leader role, as the baptism process entails relational trust, the exploration of story, and the opportunity to shepherd others toward the Gospel.

While we have specific booklets available for those interested in getting baptized, we wanted to provide a guide for GC leaders on how to facilitate that process. If you have any questions or want additional support, please feel free to call/email Michelle at (805) 260-2905 or [michelle.gee@ourelement.org](mailto:michelle.gee@ourelement.org).

### Announcing Baptisms

- Start spreading the word among your GC about baptisms (ideally at least a month out from the baptism date).
- It is helpful to briefly share what baptisms are and what they symbolize. You may even want to share some of your own story of getting baptized!
- Find out who has been baptized...because it could happen at any point in the year, this will help you be more aware going into Element's baptism celebration.
- Encourage those who have not been baptized to prayerfully consider participating. (You may want to follow up with direct invitations to specific people.)
- To demystify the process, share some information about the format of Element's baptism celebration (i.e., in a backyard pool, potluck style, open to friends/family, etc.), as well as what is expected of those getting baptized (writing their story).
- Talk about what the process entails—[signing up](#) (or letting you sign them up), meeting with you, writing their story, etc.
  - \*Michelle would like to know you are going through this process with them so we know how we can better prepare for baptisms, etc.

### Meeting With Those Getting Baptized

- Depending on the number of those in your group that want to be baptized, you may want to meet with them either individually or in a small group.
- Give each person a copy of the baptism booklet and highlight the main points/sections.
- Show them [this video](#).
- Ask if anyone has any questions about baptism or related topics.
- Ask what led them to consider getting baptized about this time. From there, you can use that as a jumping-off point to further explore their story with Jesus.
- Talk about why understanding/sharing our story is so important, and introduce the task of story-writing for baptism.

- Get a sense of how they feel about writing their story. For many, it is something new and intimidating...it's important to offer encouragement and remind them you will be available for help!
- Direct them to the questions/prompts in the booklet as a possible starting point. Not every question needs to be answered, but they can be helpful in considering where to begin. (You may even want to share your own story as inspiration!)
- Offer a "due date" of when you would like their story draft to be ready, so you can follow up with feedback and discuss/pray together.

### Reviewing Stories

- Ideally, you'll want to have stories sent to you before your follow-up meeting. This allows you to have the time/space to review and take note of follow-up questions.
- As you read, consider the following...
  - **Is it clear?** Does the story progression make sense? Is it correct in terms of grammar/spelling? Can it be followed by the average person? (While spelling might seem trivial, we want to honor those getting baptized by helping in this area.)
  - **Is it complete?** Are there any big, unanswered questions? Are you left wondering about the person's view of God, sin, salvation, etc.? Any questions in your mind are likely good areas for further exploration in your follow-up.
  - **Is Jesus the hero?** What, or who, is being celebrated in this story? If it is something/someone other than Jesus, this should be explored in your follow-up.
  - **Is it theologically correct?** It's important to distinguish between closed- and open-handed issues here. Points that should absolutely be addressed/challenged are those that pertain to the core of the Gospel message. (For example, challenging the notion of earning salvation is needed, while arguing the details of creation vs. evolution is not.)
  - **Are there ongoing issues of pastoral care/support?** While we all rely on the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit and support of community, there are sometimes unique/more specialized issues that should be noted. If someone mentions past or present struggles like abuse, mental health issues, addiction, and more, it's worth asking about. (See below for potential action steps in these scenarios.)

### Following Up on Stories

- Thank them for writing their story...speak to what you appreciated most in reading it and ask them about the process of writing it.
- Follow up on questions you noted while reading. (Example: "While I was reading, I was.... wondering about \_\_\_\_\_, .....curious how you understand \_\_\_\_\_, ....wondering how you feel about \_\_\_\_\_). The emphasis is on drawing out more information to understand their perspective before jumping in to challenge.
  - If any new information you gather feels significant/relevant to the story, feel free to encourage that it be added. (Example: "I think that would be a great addition...what do you think about adding that here?")

- If after gathering more information you still feel there needs to be some correction, share your thoughts clearly and gently.
  - For grammatical correction, you might say, “I was thinking this might read better like \_\_\_\_\_ . What do you think?”
  - For theological correction, you might approach the topic by saying, “I came across this point in your story and wanted to speak to something that I hope you find encouraging.” The Gospel is *always* good news and encouraging!
    - I once had a scenario where someone shared about feeling like they could never repay God for His goodness. I challenged that, but from a place of encouragement and not condemnation. I highlighted that by the nature of God’s grace being all-sufficient, we are freed from having to earn/repay anything. Is that not more freeing? The person I was speaking with actually smiled at the reminder. It’s important to be gentle, loving, and nurturing even in our rebuke of false doctrine.
    - After you believe the person understands the correction, talk about how you might rework that part/phrase to reflect the truth. People learn more effectively when they are able to practice themselves, as opposed to being told the right answer.
- For potential pastoral care concerns, demonstrate care by following up. We may sometimes feel uncomfortable in asking specifically about such things, but with a gentle approach, we can take steps to help nurture others in their healing/growth.
  - Is the issue/concern still ongoing?
  - Should professional/support service be recommended?
  - Is escalation to staff/elders needed?
  - Are there tangible needs that can be met?
- If the person hasn’t specified who they want to have baptize them yet, ask if they had anyone in mind. We especially love it when GC leaders/members baptize one another and/or get in the pool together! Any person that is a fellow believer can baptize another.
- After incorporating changes/additions based on the above, read through the story and confirm the person approves of the final version. Offer to pray for/with them and answer any additional questions they might have.

Once the above has been completed, you can submit the story, along with their legal name, date/place of birth, and person baptizing through this form [HERE](#).

We need all of this information *a minimum* of 1 week prior (though 2 weeks is ideal) to the baptism event. We will follow up with day-of information, as well as get their story printed.

**Thank you for your leadership and shepherding of those under your care!**