A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND PASTORS

Discerning a child's *profession of faith.*

This is a quiet guide for one of the most tender conversations a church ever has — when a child raised among us begins to say they trust Jesus. It is for parents and pastors to hold together: three planks to listen for, a few markers of fruit to watch for, and a posture that does not rush what God is doing.

— START WITH THE POSTURE

> *A child's profession is not a test to pass.*
>
> The parent has the first conversations, over time, in love. The pastors come in only after the parent has listened well. Then parent and pastor discern together, slowly and prayerfully — never making the child perform, never asking the child to say what we want to hear. We pray, and we listen for what God has already begun.
>
> This guide does not replace the Spirit's work or godly judgment. It names what we are listening for, so every family at AAC receives the same gentle measure.

— THREE PLANKS TO LISTEN FOR

01
Understanding
Can the child say the gospel in their own words?

- They have **sinned**, and it is against God.
- They need **personal forgiveness** — for themselves, not just for the world.
- They confess **who Jesus is**: His life, His death on the cross, His resurrection, His divinity. He is God.
- Salvation is by **grace alone**, through faith — not by being good.

02
Theirs
Is the confession theirs — not a performance?

- Their **own words**, not a recited script.
- They are trusting **Jesus** — not Mom and Dad's faith.
- **Conviction** — not only information.

03
Fruit
Is there beginning evidence of the Spirit's work?

Christ's own test: *"by their fruit you will know them."* Words can be parroted; fruit cannot. Watch over a season for the markers on the right.

— WHAT FRUIT LOOKS LIKE IN A CHILD

A new tenderness toward sin

Saying *sorry* without being prompted; some real grief over wrongdoing — not just being-caught regret.

A new affection for Jesus

Wanting to pray. Asking about Scripture. Talking about Him unprompted.

Changed relationships at home

Kinder with siblings. More honest with parents. Not perfectly — noticeably.

A pull toward the church and the Word

Wanting to come. Wanting to sing. Asking questions a child would not have asked before.

A new honesty

Less hiding. Quicker to confess. A willingness to bring things into the light.

A new security or joy

Less anxiety, more peace — the kind that is hard to explain other than that something has settled in them.

CAUTION ONE

Fruit in a child is *age-appropriate and partial*. We look for the Spirit at work, not moral performance.

CAUTION TWO

Fruit takes *a season*. Do not rush the discernment. Let time make the witness.

— GENTLE QUESTIONS TO DRAW IT OUT

Open questions, asked slowly, that do not prompt the "right" answer. Ask, then listen.

01 *Tell me about Jesus – who is He?*

02 *What did He do, and why did He do it?*

03 *Why do we need someone to forgive us?*

04 *Does God forgive you because you are good, or for another reason?*

05 *When you do something wrong now, what do you feel?*

06 *If Mom and Dad were not around, would you still want to follow Jesus? Why?*

— WHEN IT IS CLEAR · AND WHEN IT IS NOT YET

WHEN IT IS CLEAR

Receive, celebrate, baptize

- Tell the story to the church family.
- Schedule the baptism — the public seal of the new life in Christ.
- Walk closely with the child and the parents in the season that follows.

WHEN IT IS NOT YET

Wait well — do not shut the door

- Keep the conversation open. Do not say "no" — say "let us keep walking."
- Pray together as a family. Ask God to do what we cannot.
- Watch for fruit over a season. Trust His timing in a child.

"... and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

2 TIMOTHY 3 : 15