

Preparing a Candidate for Baptism

Summarise three areas of preparation:

1. Heart – Hunger/interest in Bible and spiritual things; love for Jesus; conversion.
2. Mind – Understand and believe the fundamental doctrinal teachings of the Bible.
3. Actions – Practical commitments to Jesus as Lord; responding to Jesus with obedience.

Points to emphasize (using Amazing Facts' Baptismal Preparation Card):

1) Bible

- a. "ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God."
- b. We believe in both the Old & New Testaments.
- c. We don't believe in picking and choosing.
- d. We take the Bible literally unless metaphoric or symbolic language is used. For example, we believe in the literal 6-day creation and a literal worldwide flood. The Bible is trustworthy even when popular science disagrees.

2) Trinity

- a. The Father and Jesus are equally loving – "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 14:9.
- b. Jesus is fully divine and has always existed – "His goings forth are from everlasting." Micah 5:2.
- c. Jesus is fully man and was "in all points tempted as we are." Hebrews 4:15.
- d. The Holy Spirit is a person and fully God. Jesus called the Spirit "He" and "Him" continually, denoting a person (John 14 and 16). The Spirit can be insulted (Hebrews 10:29) and grieved (Ephesians 4:30), denoting feelings. The Great Commission was to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20).
- e. The Trinity, or Godhead (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9), consists of 3 individual persons with different roles but equally all-powerful and all-knowing. Three individual persons, but one God – or Godhead. The Bible says, "Then God said, 'Let US make man in OUR image.'" Genesis 1:26.

3) The Cross

- a. Jesus' death was different from normal death. He died the sinner's death of separation from God – the weight of shame. This is why He was sorrowful, "even unto death." Matthew 26:38. It is why He sweat "great drops of blood." Luke 22:44. The sorrow and shame caused by carrying our sins as if they were His own (Isaiah 53:4) caused Jesus' physical death. On the cross, He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" because He could not see the Father's assurance through the guilt of our sins.

4) Repentance & Forgiveness

- a. Repentance is a gift. Acts 5:31.
- b. God is faithful and just to forgive. 1 John 1:9.
- c. Receiving forgiveness happens as we forgive others. Matthew 6:12, 14 – Ask yourself if there is anyone against whom bitterness may be harboured, rather than a spirit of forgiveness.

5) Growing with Jesus Christ as Lord

- a. We cannot accept Jesus as Saviour without also accepting Him as Lord. Jesus isn't divided. [*Jesus not only offered us salvation (Saviour) but wants to be the loving Ruler over our lives (Lord)*]
- b. Prayer is the breath of the soul. It must be honest – like talking to a friend. Try praying on your knees to encourage humility and out loud to encourage faith. Prayer isn't for God to learn about us but to bring us into a spiritual frame of mind that is in harmony with God.
- c. Personal Bible study is not an option for the Christian – it sustains his spiritual life. The Word is living (Hebrews 4:12); the words Jesus speak are spirit and life (John 6:63); man is to “live” by every word that proceeds from God (Matthew 4:4).

6) Ten Commandments

- a. The law is still valid in the New Testament – Romans 2:21-23, 7:12, 14; Ephesians 6:1-3; James 2:10-12; 1 John 3:4.
- b. The Spirit is given to overcome obstacles to obedience when we choose to obey – John 14:15-17; Acts 5:32.

7) Sabbath Observance

- a. Sundown to sundown – Genesis 1:5 – evening was the first part of a day, then the light part followed. See also Leviticus 23:32 – which speaks of a ceremonial sabbath but still makes the point that it is to be celebrated from evening to evening. See Mark 1:32 for a definition of evening.
- b. Exodus 20:8-11 – You nor your servant nor anyone within your gates is to work on the Sabbath (i.e. don't hire out work on Sabbath, don't work on Friday night, etc.). It is lawful to do good on Sabbath (Luke 6:9), but the context is saving life – emergencies or relief of suffering – not building a deck for a neighbour or some other work that could be done on any other day.
- c. No buying or selling – Nehemiah 13:15 – leads us to prepare for Sabbath by fuelling our cars and buying our groceries on Friday (or earlier) and not eating out or going shopping on Sabbath.
- d. Isaiah 58:13-14 – the Sabbath principle text. The Sabbath is for delighting in the Lord. Personal hobbies and pleasures (soccer, rugby, etc.) should not occupy us on the one day the Lord has asked us to keep holy for building our relationship with Him. The Sabbath is for SPIRITUAL things!
- e. *Offer some possible approaches to typical Sabbath conflicts – graduation parties, exams, work golf outings, etc.*

8) Second Coming

- a. No secret rapture – “every eye shall see Him.” Revelation 1:7.
- b. Literal, audible, personal – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.
- c. We need to be ready and not be lulled to sleep by the “cares of this life.” Luke 21:34.

9) Heavenly Sanctuary and Judgment Hour

- a. Jesus is our High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews 8:1-2.
- b. Jesus is interceding for sinners and serving as our “advocate” in the heavenly judgment described in Daniel 7:9-14 and in the referred to as the “cleansing of the sanctuary” in Daniel 8:14.
- c. The judgment, or cleansing of the sanctuary, began at the conclusion of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, or in 1844. This is why God’s people can say that the hour of His judgment “has come” in Revelation 14:7.
- d. Judgment precedes the coming of Jesus because when He comes His reward is with Him. Revelation 22:12.

10) Death

- a. The dead sleep until the resurrection. There is no consciousness in death. Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Acts 2:29-34.

11) Resurrection - Millennium - Lake of Fire - New Earth

- a. Resurrection of the righteous at Jesus coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
- b. 1,000 years of desolation on earth with Satan bound and no one for him to deceive. Revelation 20:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23-26.
- c. The righteous have “judgment” committed to them in heaven during 1,000 years. This doesn’t determine who will be saved or lost, but God allows the saints to carefully investigate the records of evil men and women, so that every person will be convinced of the justice of God in the destruction of the wicked (which takes place after the Millennium). Revelation 20:4; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3.
- d. The unrighteous are resurrected at the end of 1,000 years, surround and attack the holy city, and are devoured by fire raining down from heaven. The wicked are not burned for all eternity but are totally destroyed – brought to ashes by the fire. Revelation 20:15; Malachi 4:1-3.

12) Health

- a. Health is important, but as a church we recognize that improvement in health is progressive (increased exercise and water, improved nutrition, etc.). This progressive element of health is recognized with the exception of two areas – two areas that violate the Scriptural injunction to not defile the body temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19) and should therefore be discarded as part of our commitment to follow Christ:
 - i. Unclean foods – Leviticus 11. This distinction existed at the time of the Flood (Genesis 7:1-2), which was before God gave His law at Sinai.
 - ii. Addictive and mind-altering substances (non-prescription) – Alcohol,

tobacco, caffeine, etc. Try substituting with things that are not addictive or artificially stimulating. God wants our minds to be clear so that we are more attentive to the voice of conscience and stronger to resist temptation.

13) Christian Behaviour

- a. Avoid reading, watching, or listening to sinful things. Philippians 4:8 should be the filter through which all our entertainment passes (i.e. TV, movies, music, internet, video games, etc.). Hollywood does not appeal to the spiritual nature but to the carnal. Caution is needed because even non-“sinful” amusements can blunt our interest in spiritual things.
- b. Christians should dress modestly – avoiding clothes that are too revealing, clothes that are overly priced just because of a label, or jewellery that has no function. 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4 (the word “merely” in some translations is added); Revelation 12:1 compared with Revelation 17:4.

14) Marriage

- a. The family comes first after our commitment to God, then the church.
- b. There is no Biblical justification for divorce with the exception of adultery. Matthew 5:32.
- c. Physical relationships before marriage is fornication and clearly spoken of as sin in the Bible. Galatians 5:19-21. If a couple is living together outside of marriage, they should consider separating or marrying after getting the appropriate pre-marital counselling.
- d. Family worship binds families together. A sample family worship consists of prayer, a Bible passage, a song, and closing prayer. It will preferably be no longer than 10 or 15 minutes. The Father, as the spiritual servant leader of his family, should ensure that the family is taking time together with God.

15) Remnant Church/Spirit of Prophecy (16)

- a. Revelation 12:17 teaches that the last-day church will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus is the prophetic gift (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9).
- b. The SDA Church recognises that time is needed to fully have confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. When one is baptised they commit to recognising that the prophetic gift is one of the identifying marks of the last day church and that the gift of prophecy is still available to the church until the end of time. Eph. 4:11-13; Joel 2:28-31.
- c. Matthew 24:14 predicts the gospel going to the entire world before the end comes. Revelation 14:7-13 portrays the fulfillment of that prediction in the form of three messages going to all the world before the earth is reaped (in verse 14). The Three Angels Messages also give the detail as to what that gospel includes. Seventh-day Adventists recognise the messages of the Three Angels of Revelation 14 as representing the last message we are to deliver to the world. These messages include a call to worship God as Creator (the Sabbath), a call that judgment has come (cleansing of the sanctuary), a call that Babylon is fallen (error exposed by a restoration and proper understanding of Bible truths about death, hell, Second Coming, etc.),

and a warning against worshipping according to tradition instead of the commandments of God (mark of the beast).

- d. The special calling of the SDA Church leads its members to:
 - i. Actively attend church just like Jesus. Luke 4:16.
 - ii. Embrace the mission of sharing this end-time message in their personal sphere of influence and beyond.

16) Spirit of Prophecy – see #15 above.

17) The Lord's Supper and Footwashing

- a. John 13:14-17 – We wash one another's feet because Jesus told us to.
- b. We use grape juice and not fermented wine for the Lord's Supper since wine was a term used to refer to both fermented and unfermented juice. Isaiah 65:8. Context must be considered to determine which meaning is intended.
- c. We practice "open communion," meaning that Christians of any denomination are invited to participate in the ordinance.
- d. The Lord's Supper is a believer's ordinance like baptism. Just like we don't have infant or early childhood baptism, we don't have infant or early childhood participation in the Lord's Supper and footwashing.

18) Tithes & Offerings

- a. Malachi 3:8-10 says that withholding tithes and offerings is robbing God.
- b. Leviticus 27:30 says tithe is holy to the Lord. Returning tithe is not a matter of generosity, but honesty. Deuteronomy 14:22 says we should return tithe on our increase. Tithe means tenth. So one tenth of our increase – our gross income – belongs to God and should be returned to Him. It is not ours to determine how to use.
- c. Numbers 18:21 says that the tithe was exclusively for the Levites – the full-time ministers. God sacredly guarded the tithe for that purpose.
- d. The tithe was placed in a storehouse and then distributed to the Levites. In the same way, SDA churches send their tithe to the local conference which in turn uses that for the support of full-time ministers and Bible workers. All ministers get the same basic salary – it is not affected by the tithe-giving of the local church.
- e. Offerings are above and beyond the 10% and are given liberally as a person is able. Systematic giving (some % of gross income) is recommended. The local church does not get any of the tithes because God commanded that to be used for the "Levites" – the full-time ministry. Local church operating expenses require offerings. "Combined Budget" is a recommended place to give the greatest portion of a systematic offering. Start with some percentage and as time goes by consider increasing. No one in the church is personally benefited by offerings, but when we come to the end we won't regret giving to God's cause.
- f. Visually describe how to use tithe envelope – especially the "tithe" line for their 10%.

- g. Gambling is addictive and a poor investment of God's resources and should be avoided by Christians.

19) Baptism

- a. Represents dying to old ways and committing to new ways. Romans 6:3-4.
- b. Someone being baptised is baptised into the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13. To be in a body you must be connected with other parts of the same body. Baptism, therefore, makes someone a part, or member, of the body of believers with whom they agree concerning the fundamental teachings of the Bible – in this case, the SDA Church. By being baptised, we join ourselves with a local body of believers (at a local SDA church) who are also joined with a worldwide body of believers (SDA Church). There is no such thing as a “lone ranger” Christian. 1 Corinthians 12:20-22. The early church was organised and we should not be afraid of organisation.