

*You're thinking about
baptizing your child . . .*



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So You're Thinking About Having Your Child Baptized . . .

God has given us one chance at raising our children. They are precious to him, just as they are to you, and he wants to be part of their lives. In fact, he wants to do far more for our children than we could ever do. While we don't know all that will be part of their lives in the years ahead, he does. We can only imagine what kind of changes and challenges they will experience over the course of their years and they need something steady and unchanging on which to rely. They need the promises from God that won't change and that will always provide them hope and strength. They need values to guide daily living that is healthy. They need a relationship with God that gives them identity, personal value, and mercy.

The best time to build this relationship with God is childhood. The spiritual foundation that is established early serves as the platform for a healthy and rich spiritual life that affects the rest of your life. No doubt that this is one of the reasons Jesus cared so much for little ones. In a day and culture in which children were given very limited access to the adult world Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder." (Mk.10:14) Throughout the Bible God makes a special point of including children among the believers and talks repeatedly of making sure they grow up knowing him and what he has done for them.

After Jesus rose from the dead he said, "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 all that I have commanded you." (Mt.28:19-20) A disciple is one who is a follower of his master. A disciple trusts what the master says and what his master did for him; a disciple has his life increasingly shaped by the master's teachings. When Jesus said "make disciples," he was inviting us to help people know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. According to Jesus' words, all those being discipled should be baptized and taught. He makes this statement without excluding any ethnic group or any age group.

What Is Christian Baptism?

It is really quite simple. The word “baptize” is actually a common Greek word – the New Testament was written in Greek – meaning “to wash with water.” So what Jesus said in plain English is that those who are being discipled should be set apart as a disciple by “washing them with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Although this may seem strange to us, in the day that Jesus lived there were a couple of different types of “washings” that they did that were part of their spiritual habits. What Jesus introduced was having water placed on you, identifying you as one who would be a disciple of Jesus and who would believe in who God is as Jesus taught.

What Happens When A Person is Baptized?

First, as mentioned above, you are marked as a disciple of Jesus. God also connects certain promises to being marked as his disciple. Consider these Bible verses:

You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water and the word. (Ephesians 5:26)

He saved us, not because of deeds we have done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5-6)

In short, these tell us that God actually does something in a person when he or she is baptized. That person is “clothed with Christ” – like Jesus wraps himself around you. That person is “cleansed”, meaning that because you are identified in Christ your sins are forgiven. That person is given a new type of birth, a spiritual birth as a disciple of Jesus enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Should Children and Even Infants Be Baptized?

From the very beginning of the Christian faith, believers have always baptized their children, identifying them with Christ. Children were specifically invited to be included on the very first day believers were baptized:

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children
(Acts 2:38-39)

There are many reasons why our children should be baptized. First, whether we like to acknowledge it or not, our children are sinful. It is sometimes disconcerting to realize that most of parenting is helping our children learn not to live out their own sinfulness. Because they are sinful, they need forgiveness just like adults. Jesus came to be able to give that forgiveness to all who believe in him.

Children, even infants, can believe in Jesus. Faith in Christ is a gift of God; it is something that God himself creates in us. 1 Corinthians 12:3 says that “No one can confess Jesus as Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” Some might say that you have to reach a certain mental capacity or level of decision-making ability in order to decide to believe in Jesus. However, the Bible nowhere teaches that. In fact, it teaches that the only way we can believe is not by our ability or decision, but by God creating in us faith in Jesus. So John the Baptist in his mother’s womb was enabled by the Holy Spirit to recognize the presence of Jesus (Luke 1:39-45). Jesus himself spoke strong words against anyone who caused “one of these little ones who believe” in him to fall away (Matthew 18:6). Notice he said that they could believe. So, since it is God’s work to create faith in Jesus in us and he shows us that he can do this even in infants, they should be baptized.

Is Baptism Magical in Some Way?

No, baptism is not some magical incantation. Rather, it is one of the ways that God touches an individual life. Once marked by baptism, Jesus said to learn what he taught. It is important that what God is doing in a person's life not be left to die out. We always have the ability to say "no" to God and push away or ignore our relationship with him. For this reason, baptism should never be seen as a spiritual life insurance policy. The water or ceremony of baptism is not the goal of Jesus. Baptism is important because of what God does through it as he creates faith in Jesus and places his mark on the person, identifying him as one whom Jesus saved.

What are Sponsors or God-parents?

Their job is to be spiritual cheer leaders. They are to pray daily for the godchild, talk with her about her faith in Christ, model life as one who believes and follows Jesus, and do everything they can to make sure their godchild grows up trusting and following the Lord. For that reason it is a good thing to choose sponsors who will have a long-term relationship with your child. A person does not have to have godparents – or they can have a dozen!

What Should I Do To Prepare My Child for Baptism?

For starters, meet with the pastor who will be doing the baptism to work out the details. Choose sponsors who will pick up the spiritual responsibility and talk with them about their role. If your child is little, go to the baptismal pool and help your child feel comfortable. If they are older, talk with them about the purpose for being baptized – especially about what it means to trust that Jesus gave his life so that we could be forgiven.

What Do I Do After Baptism?

As Jesus said, baptism is part of making a disciple, so what follows baptism is critical. It is often helpful to think in terms of building a network of spiritual support – spiritual assets for your child’s growth. Here is a list of “spiritual assets” that should be developed for your child.

- ✚ Parents who are actively growing in their faith. (That’s you!) Our children read us and they will know what is important in life to us, so if you are growing in your spiritual life that will have a profound affect on your children.
- ✚ Pray for your child daily. Pray that they would grow in trusting Christ, knowing his will for daily living, and safe from deception.
- ✚ Other significant adults who hold the same faith in Christ that care about your child and interact with her.
- ✚ Peers that hold the same faith so that when they play together the same teachings of Jesus will be reinforced. Parents can affect what children become friends, so pick some who are potential influences for Christ.
- ✚ Bible knowledge is important. At early ages children think concretely, so that is a good time for them to hear and simply learn the Bible stories. The concepts the scripture teaches flow out of the events, so as your child develops conceptual thinking, the stories serve as the foundation to teach the concepts. If they know the stories, they have a basis to learn spiritual concepts. The attached appendix lists the top 75 stories of the Bible with a chart listing the ages by when they should know them.
- ✚ Spiritual events serve a healthy role through a child’s life. Annual or recurring events that regularly reinforce faith provide an enduring spiritual life. For example, Christmas can be a spiritual event or it can not be. What habit or practice of the Christmas celebration can you introduce that helps keep a spiritual focus? Maybe reading the Christmas story from Luke before you open presents or decorate the tree might help. Some families have a large nail that they place deep in the branches of the tree as the last “ornament”; they make a big deal of it as a reminder of knowing why

Christ came. Similar things could be done at various times in the year to build spiritual events into the calendar of life.

- ✚ Spiritual habits make a walk with Christ a regular part of life. These are recurring practices that feed a spiritual life and include such things as prayer, Bible reading, worship, service, giving, and conversation.

Building these assets helps your child continue to develop as a baptized child of God.

To Wrap Up . . .

God has given parents an awesome privilege and a tremendous responsibility. Equipping your child to have a relationship with God by faith in Jesus should be a top priority, so a child should be marked as a disciple of Jesus by baptism as Jesus instructed and surrounded by those tools God uses to foster that faith. God can do far more in the lives of our children than we would imagine. What a blessing for our children!

What we have heard and known
 What our fathers told us,
We will not hide them from their children;
We will tell the next generation
 the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
His power and the wonders he has done.

Psalm 78:3-4

Top 75 Bible Stories (Appendix)

Story	Reference	Age 4	Age 6	Age 8	Age 10
Creation	Gen.1	X	X	X	X
Creation of humanity	Gen.2		X	X	X
The fall into sin	Gen.3	X	X	X	X
Cain and Abel	Gen.4:1-16			X	X
Noah	Gen.6:9-9:17	X	X	X	X
Tower of Babel	Gen.11:1-9			X	X
Call of Abraham	Gen.12:1-9		X	X	X
Sodom and Gomorrah	Gen.18-19			X	X
Sarah laughs at God's promise	Gen.18:9-15				X
Birth of Isaac	Gen.21:1-7		X	X	X
"Sacrifice" of Isaac	Gen.22				X
Birth of Jacob and Esau	Gen.25:19-34		X	X	X
Esau sells his birthright	Gen.25:27-34				X
Isaac "steals" the blessing	Gen.27			X	X
Jacob flees/ladder dream	Gen.28:10-22			X	X
12 sons of Jacob (Israel)	Gen.29-30				X
Joseph's favorite status/being sold	Gen.37		X	X	X
Joseph in Egypt	Gen.38-41			X	X
Reunited Joseph and brothers	Gen.42-45			X	X
Moses' birth & rescue	Ex.1-2		X	X	X
Moses' call (burning bush)	Ex.3	X	X	X	X
10 plagues	Ex.7-11		X	X	X
Passover	Ex.12		X	X	X
Crossing the Red Sea	Ex.14			X	X
Manna & quail	Ex.16			X	X
Mt. Sinai/Ten Commandments	Ex.19-20		X	X	X
Building of the tabernacle	Ex.35-38				X
Sacrifices of the Old Testament	Lev.1-8				X
Quail in wilderness	Num.11:31-35				X
12 spies (+ 40 years)	Num.13			X	X
Battle of Jericho	Josh.6	X	X	X	X
Achan's sin	Josh.7				X
Deborah	Jdg.4				X
Gideon	Jdg.7			X	X
Samson	Jdg.13-16	X	X	X	X

Birth of Samuel	1 Sam.1				X
God talks to Samuel	1 Sam.3			X	X
Saul made king (1st king)	1 Sam.9				X
David & Goliath	1 Sam.17		X	X	X
David flees from Saul	1 Sam.18-30				X
King David	2 Sam.5	X	X	X	X
David & Bathsheba	2 Sam.11				X
Absalom's revolt	2 Sam.15-18				X
King Solomon	1 Kings 1			X	X
Solomon's wisdom	1 Kings 3:16-28			X	X
Solomon builds the temple	1 Kings 6-8		X	X	X
Solomon falls in love with the world	1 Kings 11				X
Divided kingdom	1 Kings 11:9-13				X
Elijah and Ahab	1 Kings 18			X	X
Elijah's life	1 Kings 17-22				X
Elijah in the fiery chariot	2 Kings 2	X	X	X	X
Elisha's life	2 Kings 3-8				X
Good king Josiah	2 Kings 22-23			X	X
Captivity	2 Kings 25				X
Shadrack, Meshak, Abednego	Daniel 3		X	X	X
Daniel	Daniel 6		X	X	X
Ezra's return & rebuild the temple	Ezra/Nehemiah				X
Zechariah & announcement of John's birth	Luke 1			X	X
Annunciation	Luke 1:26-38		X	X	X
Birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-20	X	X	X	X
Simeon	Luke 2:22-35				X
The boy Jesus in the temple	Luke 2:41-52			X	X
John the Baptist & Jesus' baptism	Mt.3			X	X
Temptation of Jesus	Mt.4:1-11			X	X
Parable(s) of Jesus	Mt.13			X	X
Miracle(s) of Jesus	Mt.8-9	X	X	X	X
Palm Sunday	Mt.21	X	X	X	X
Jesus drives out the money changers	Mt.21:12-17			X	X
The Last Supper	Mt.26:20-29			X	X
Jesus in Gethsemane	Mt.26:36-56			X	X
Jesus on trial	Mt.26:57-27:26		X	X	X
Jesus crucified	Mt.27:27-56	X	X	X	X
Jesus resurrection	Mt.28:1-10	X	X	X	X

Jesus with disciples to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35				X
Jesus' ascension	Acts 1:1-11	X	X	X	X
Pentecost	Acts 2		X	X	X
Conversion of Saul	Acts 9			X	X
Peter to Caesarea and Cornelius	Acts 10				X

