



Discover Baptism
Neighbors House Church

Parents,

This book is designed to help YOU instruct your child about the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ and prepare him or her for the baptism process. God has ordained you as the main spiritual influence in the life of your child, and we want to partner with you to help you fulfill that role.

If your child has a desire to be baptized, they desire a good thing. Baptism should not be entered into lightly, however, and without proper preparation. It requires careful and prayerful consideration to ensure that both parents and child understand what baptism is, why a person is to be baptized, and when it is appropriate to be baptized.

Because of this, Neighbors House recommends that a child be about 12 years old but this is not set in stone. We do understand that even 12 year olds may not yet understand the symbolic nature of baptism or have a correct understanding of the gospel. We also understand that children under 12 may understand the meaning of baptism and be able to articulate a basic understanding of the gospel. This is why this booklet was created – to help you assess the readiness of your child.

In this booklet, you'll find basic information about baptism, what the baptism process looks like at Neighbors House, and even some answers to the most frequently asked questions about baptism.

As a pastor, there are few things that bring me greater joy than to see a young person follow Jesus into the waters of baptism and publicly declare that he or she is a follower of Christ. My prayer is that this booklet will be a great resource to allow you to have life-altering conversations about the gospel of Jesus Christ with your children.

Grace and Peace,

Matt Harris
Lead Pastor



THE BAPTISM PROCESS FOR KIDS AT NEIGHBORS HOUSE

1. Take as much time as you need to go through and review with your child this information. Please don't rush through this part. Give God time to work in the heart of your child. It may lead to some great conversation.
2. Contact a member of the pastoral staff or kid's ministry staff and schedule a date and time for you and your child to meet. At that meeting, your child will be asked to explain how and why he or she became a Christian and why he or she would like to be baptized. This is a powerful opportunity for your child to express faith in his or her own words.
3. After the conclusion of your meeting, if the parents and pastor both feel comfortable pursuing baptism, you will be given the "Developing Your Story Kids Guide" with details pertaining to the next baptism class.
4. Before attending the baptism class, help your child work through the "Developing Your Story Kids Guide" and have them be ready to share their story with other members of the baptism class. This will be a great way for them to practice as they prepare to share their story with the congregation on baptism Sunday. Important details pertaining to baptism Sunday will also be covered in the class and attendance will be mandatory.
5. Baptism Celebration
6. A lifetime of continued discipleship training and follow-up with your child.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF BAPTISM

What is Baptism?

Baptism is one of the ordinances given to the Church and instituted by Christ (along with Communion).

Baptism is intended as a demonstration of a person's saving faith in Jesus Christ and is an outward act of an inward reality. Water baptism is intended for the person who has received the saving benefits of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and has entered into the beginning stages of discipleship. You, and your child, are not Christians because you are baptized, you are baptized because you are Christians.

The Importance & Significance of Baptism

- Baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord's command and follows His example. (Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 3:13-17)
- Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 6:12-13)
- Baptism symbolizes Jesus' death, burial and resurrection and a believer's identification with those truths. (Romans 6)
- Baptism is also a symbol of washing/cleansing from sin. (Acts 22:16, Titus 3:5)
- Baptism is for believers in Christ who have placed their faith in His work and not their own work.
- Baptism is a symbol of our entrance into the body of Christ, the Church. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)
- Baptism is intended to be a one-time act and to serve as a memory to help the believer remember who they are, a believer and disciple of Jesus Christ.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY?

Your main goal as spiritual guardian is to make sure your child understands the truths of the Gospel and displays a strong affection for Jesus. Baptism void of a redeemed relationship with Jesus is unbiblical and of no value. Therefore, your goal is to make sure your child understands the meaning of sin, the holiness of God and the significance of Christ's work on the cross so that he or she can respond in faith.



Does your child have an understanding of the central truths of Christianity? Could he or she articulate it in his or her own words?

- I'm a sinner; God is holy; sin has to be paid for; the penalty for sin is death and eternal separation from God.
- God, in his love, gave us a way to be restored to Him by sending His Son, Jesus.
- Jesus lived perfectly and died as a substitute for our sins.
- Through faith & belief in Christ, Jesus becomes our substitute and pays the debt that we could never pay.
- His resurrection from the dead proved that Jesus was exactly who he said he was.
- Because Jesus is my Lord and Savior, my desire is to be his disciple and the Holy Spirit gives me the power to do that.

Is your child, to the best of your knowledge...

- A believer in Jesus Christ?
- Aware of the gravity of his or her sin?
- Genuinely repentant for sin?
- Presently putting faith & trust in Christ alone for salvation?
- Beginning to show the signs of being filled by the Holy Spirit and a pattern of growth in their Christian life?

If you can answer "Yes!" to these questions, then it may be time to begin a discussion about baptism.

SHOULD WE WAIT?

In the Scriptures, there is often a short amount of time between coming to faith in Christ and baptism. We believe that with children it is best to make sure there is a genuine faith relationship and a child-appropriate understanding of the gospel. It is not as simple as a prayer at bedtime one night. Having said that, it is clear in Scripture that genuine believers in Jesus should be obedient to Jesus' commands, one of which is to be publicly baptized.

It is often normal for children to see a baptism or hear a story about baptism and express a desire to be baptized themselves immediately afterward. If your child continues to express this desire without prompting or reminding, it is a good sign that the Holy Spirit is working in him or her and fueling their interest in baptism.

Some additional thoughts:

- There are some definite reasons to wait on baptism. Sometimes your child, or even you, the parents, may have incorrect motivations for being baptized, i.e. my friends are doing it, parents' peace of mind (as if baptism secures eternity for their child) I want to be on stage, etc.
- It's ok to not rush the process. As a parent and spiritual guardian, you want to make sure your child has a proper understanding of baptism and salvation before they are baptized. Waiting a few years for your child to develop and mature can even have a potentially greater spiritual impact than being baptized too soon. The decision to wait should only be to maximize the spiritual benefit for your child and to be sure there is real and genuine faith in Christ present. For these reasons, we at Neighbors House recommend that a child be about 12 years of age, but this is by no means a decision that can't be reconsidered if both parents and staff feel your child is ready.



- A child can begin to understand the **symbolic nature of baptism** at different ages, depending on their cognitive and spiritual development. Generally here are the typical age ranges for understanding baptism:

Ages 4–6: They may grasp that baptism is about Jesus and following Him but may not fully understand symbolism.

Ages 7–9: Many children begin to understand **basic spiritual concepts**, like sin, forgiveness, and obedience to Christ. They can often recognize baptism as an outward sign of faith.

Ages 10–12: Most children at this age can understand baptism as a **symbol of dying to sin and being raised to new life in Christ** (Romans 6:3-4).

Ages 13+: Older children and teens typically have a **mature understanding** of baptism's significance and personal commitment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is there a minimum age? How young is too young?

A: The Bible doesn't give a specific age mandate for baptism. All that can be inferred from biblical teaching is that a child must be able to give a credible profession of faith. There are many younger children who could make such a profession but who may not be ready for baptism. There are also older children who may not be able to give, with certainty, a profession of faith. Therefore, we don't make age a matter of policy or requirement, but we do recommend waiting until the child is about 12 years old. We lean heavily on parents to discuss these matters with each other and to begin the process of talking about salvation and baptism with their kids. Generally speaking, older elementary age is when kids gain a greater understanding of what baptism is and can appreciate and remember that moment in more significant ways. That doesn't mean baptism can't be pursued at a younger age, but much of that is dependent on a child's ability to understand and process the truths of the gospel and the significance and meaning of baptism. Baptism should be something that is remembered vividly. The older the child, the more of a chance there is for that child to remember and cherish that experience.

Q: Does my child have to attend the baptism class and share their testimony in front of the congregation on baptism Sunday?

A: We believe they should unless there is some disability that prevents them from doing so, and not simply fear or anxiety. The baptism class is the first chance for your child to take the extremely important step of learning to share their faith in preparation for sharing with the church body. In other words, this is a safe, trial run of what they should, as believers in Christ, be prepared to do in the future. (1 Peter 3:15). When possible, we like to video your child days before the baptism sharing their testimony so they are free from that anxiety of having to share the day of their baptism.

Q: Why don't we practice infant baptism?

A: Simply put, we don't baptize infants that are not old enough to understand the truths of the gospel and the significance of baptism. Infant baptism is attaching the Old Testament ritual of circumcision to the New Covenant through Christ. In every New Testament command and instance of baptism,



repentance and faith precedes baptism. There are no instances of infant baptism in the Bible, and baptism is a celebration and declaration of a person's faith in Christ and decision to follow him as a disciple. This is a developmental impossibility for infants. We do understand that for many people who grow up in different faith traditions, this can be cause for uncertainty, questions, and even family division. If you'd like to talk more about this or have further questions, any of our missional community Pastors would be more than happy to discuss it further.

Q: Why do we make such a big deal about separating salvation and baptism?

A: A period of time between their salvation or coming-to-faith moment and the actual baptism allows children to properly separate those two events. We believe this helps alleviate further confusion down the road in understanding that they are saved by faith and not by being baptized.

Q: What if my child has a developmental disability?

A: A very high percentage of developmentally disabled people are considered in the teachable category. Thus, they can hear the word of God, the truths of the gospel, and possibly respond in faith. Parents should teach the gospel message and God's word to their children with enthusiasm and believe that seeds planted are a worthy endeavor in the life of their child. We want to avoid two potentially faulty reactions to a person's desire to be baptized. We do not want to baptize a person just to baptize them. Nor do we want to restrict a qualified person (even if they are developmentally disabled) from being baptized. Thus, grace will approach each case with care and individual attention to seek God's leading.

CONTACT US

If you'd like further resources about leading your child to Christ or how-to follow-up with your child in the weeks and months following baptism, the Neighbors House Team would love to be of assistance.

Or, if you'd like to set up a time for your child to meet with one of our Team members, please feel free to contact me.

Matt Harris
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How do I lead my child to Christ? A Simple Guide.

There are many ways to begin a conversation. If you don't have a preferred way of talking about the gospel to your children, feel free to use this one. Below is a very simple, and yet effective way to present the gospel to children. It is called "Bad News/Good News." Always remember that hope is in the message, and not the method.

Bad News

1. You are a sinner – Romans 3:23
 - Ask your child to think about whether or not he or she has done everything in their life up until this point perfectly (should get a "no").
 - Give a simple illustration about trying to jump over the ocean or some other impossible task. It can't be done, just like being perfect according to God.
2. There is a consequence or penalty for being a sinner – Romans 6:23
 - The wages (what we earn) for our sin is death (eternal separation from God, etc.)
 - Give a simple illustration about how you get paid for your chores or a job that you do. What you earn for sin is death.

Transition

Assure them that this is terrible news, and it is, but that is what makes the good news so good.

Good News

1. Christ paid the penalty for sin – Romans 5:8 or 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - Jesus Christ, the only perfect person, the only one who was in right relationship with God, died in our place so that we could miss out on the consequences of our sin.
 - Give a simple illustration about someone else going to jail for a crime that you committed, etc.
2. All that is required is faith and belief – Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, John 1:12
 - All we have to do to receive God's free gift is have faith and believe that what God said was true and that Jesus did pay the price for you.
 - Illustration: If I were to tell you that I would give you one dollar right now for free, would you believe (be sure of my promise – Heb. 11:1) that I would give it to you? In the same way, Jesus is offering eternal life as a free gift if we will believe Him for it right now. You can believe He will give you eternal life as a free gift because He is God and He died for your sins and rose again from the dead. You must believe that eternal life is a gift and not earned by being good or doing good things. (Ephesians 2:8,9)
 - Ask your child, "If you were to tell me how I could have all my sins forgiven and have eternal life, what would you tell me?" (Make sure you ask them this first instead of asking a yes or no question if they have eternal life.)
 - If they do put their faith in Christ alone, make sure to assure them of what they've done and the promises God has made. (John 5:24, I John 5:13)

Confusing Phrases to Avoid with Kids

Beware of phrases that confuse or muddy the issue of believing or trusting Christ alone. Your desire should be to give an accurate and biblical answer to how a person is saved.

1. "Ask Jesus into your heart"



- When we become believers in Christ and accept God's free gift of grace, the Bible does say that the Holy Spirit (not Jesus) comes to live inside of us and fill us, but this is always after belief or coming to faith.
- This phrase cannot be found in the Bible anywhere, and it has the potential to take the focus away from faith and belief in Christ alone as the substitute for your sins.
- Often Revelation 3:20 is used as an illustration of this. **Note – John was writing to believers, specifically, the church at Laodemia. Jesus warned them that they were going to be disciplined in 3:19. He was telling believers that he wanted to have fellowship with them, and they needed to repent. If they did this He would come into the room (not their heart) and eat with them (have fellowship with them).*

**The next two phrases are on this list, not because they are not biblical, but because they have more to do with the ongoing sanctification (or discipleship) process after someone becomes a believer. When sharing the initial and basic gospel with children, an attempt to differentiate between what saves us and the inevitable life-long response to God saving us is important.*

2. "Give your life to Christ"

- What is usually meant by this phrase is that we should follow and obey Jesus (and we should). But again, this is not what brings about salvation. It is simply a natural overflow of salvation's effect on a person's life.
- Slowly, but surely, the believer in Christ begins to give their entire self to Christ with joy and gladness.

3. "Make Jesus Lord of your life"

- This is part of the discipleship process on the other side of salvation. It is not the act of trusting Christ for eternal life as a free gift.
- A genuine believer in Jesus Christ will begin to show the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit and will begin to gladly obey and give control of one's life to Jesus.
- Only through faith in God's free gift can someone have the capacity to begin making Jesus his or her Lord.

Other Questions

1. "Saying the Prayer"

- One of the things that often accompany kids and salvation is "the prayer." Remember that saying some words or praying to God isn't what saves us. It is the faith behind that prayer that saves us. A child or adult can have a saving faith in Christ without praying. The contrary is true as well; a person can pray to God with no faith behind it.
- For children and adults, however, a prayer is often a useful tool to help someone verbalize the faith decision they may have just made. If you decide to use a prayer to help someone you're leading to Christ, make it a point to help him or her understand that it wasn't saying the right words in a prayer that gives them the right relationship with God. The "Sinner's Prayer" isn't some magical combination that opens up the secret door. A "just get them through the prayer" attitude can be dangerous to long-term spiritual health.
- Please don't be afraid to use prayer as a tool with your kids, but always come back with instruction that lets a child know that they are in right standing with God because of one thing, and one thing alone: faith.

2. "What should I do as a parent?"

- Talk about the gospel truth, especially with the children in your life. Talk openly and passionately about the difference the gospel has made in your life.



- Have a plan for sharing the gospel with your children. Not so they can go to heaven and you can have peace, but because you love them and want them to have the most abundant, best life, which is exactly what Jesus promises.
- Pray every day that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of your children to the truth of the gospel, and that they would have a powerful experience of the grace of God.
- Don't manipulate kids or pressure them to make a decision. They are better off owning it for themselves, or it's going to cause more heartache in the end. Remember that this is all in God's hands. Do your best, and trust God that he'll bring about the result He desires at the time He desires.

