

Equipping Parents for a Child's Baptism

What do you do when your child tells you that they want to get baptized? You, as the parent/guardian, are the best gauge of when your child is ready. You also play a significant role in helping your child understand baptism. Our desire is to walk with you during this process. We hope the information below will help start meaningful conversations at home and answer some questions you may have.

Should children get baptized? At what age?

Children have a tremendous capacity to experience the presence of God and understand the significance of baptism.

- Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children." Matthew 11:25
- Jesus said, "Therefore go and 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 to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

Our experience at CG Midtown is that children begin to show interest in baptism around the age of five, especially when they see a baptism take place, or after hearing the Godly Play baptism story in their classroom each January. While younger children can have a relationship with Jesus, they will not necessarily remember or understand the significance of the event. We encourage parents to wait until their child initiates conversations about baptism. There are certainly some intentional steps you can take toward having these conversations as you disciple your children. Your children's ministry director is available if you'd like more direction/suggestions for discipleship efforts.

When are children ready?

We want to affirm a child's desire to get baptized and help them through the process of making this decision. Below, you will find some questions and discussion points you can use at home. Ask the questions in an open and honest way so that the child doesn't think you are looking for a "right" answer. The bullet points under the questions are not answers we expect from the children, but are provided to help you teach your child about baptism.

- What are some reasons to get baptized? (Read these passages with your child as preparation for baptism.)
 - To follow Jesus' example (Matthew 3:13-17)
 - To obey God (Matthew 28:19)
 - In the New Testament, everyone who accepted Jesus was baptized (Acts 2:38-41; chapters 8, 9, 10, 16)
 - To live a new life with God (Romans 6:3-5)
 - To clothe ourselves with Christ (Galatians 3:26-27)
 - To respond to God (I Peter 3:21)
- What does it mean to be baptized?
 - It is a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection
 - Read Colossians 2:12
 - When you are lowered under the water, it's a symbol that reminds us that Jesus died for us and our sins are buried. When you are lifted out of the water, it reminds us that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.
 - It is a symbol of your new life in Christ
 - Read Romans 6:4

- Your baptism is a part of what it means to be a Christian. You are baptized because you want to give your life to Jesus and, because of that, you follow Jesus' example in baptism. Baptism is the ceremony that we enter into that allows us to join with Jesus in his death and resurrection. In baptism, we are buried with Jesus in the water and then raised to new life with him when we come out of the water.
 - This is also the place where we are brought into the family of the church. Baptism is one of the symbols that holds us together with Jesus and the other people within the church.
- Why do you want to be baptized?
 - If you have been baptized, respond by sharing your baptism story and why you wanted to get baptized.
 - Other questions to ask on the journey to baptism:
 - a. When you think of Jesus, what comes to mind?
 - b. What does following Jesus mean to you?
 - c. What Scripture stories or verses have been important to you? Why?
 - d. What question(s) do you have about baptism?

Advice for Parents

- Well-meaning parents may expect too much of a child who is baptized, wanting him/her to live up to their (the parents') expectations. Parents sometimes forget what it is like to be a child and expect certain behavior based on a child's decision to get baptized. Parents should guard against using the issue of baptism to try to change the child's behavior before or after baptism. This can make a child feel like he can't live up to expectations even though they have a genuine desire to follow Jesus.
- Avoid putting off your child when they voice a desire to get baptized. There is potential for your child to get the message that baptism is only for the spiritually mature or that you must be a certain age to follow Jesus. If you want your child to wait until they are older so that they can remember the decision, make an intentional plan to make it a discipleship journey until that future date. Baptism is not a sign of having attained a certain spiritual standard, but a symbolic act of someone who through faith has died with Christ and has risen to eternal life.

Meeting with the Children's Ministry Director

Once the decision has been made for your child to be baptized, please contact Lynne Smiley, the Midtown children's ministry director, at lynne@cground.org. We will discuss the next steps of deciding a date for the baptism and to arrange a meeting. During this meeting, the children's ministry director and area church pastor will meet with you and your child using our Baptism Godly Play story as a centerpiece for the conversation. We will answer any questions you or your child may have.