



Children *experiencing* BAPTISM

September 2003

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Ministry *Direction*

Water baptism is...

- **an outward testimony** of what has taken place inside of us when we ask Christ to be our Savior (I John 1: 9).
- **an act of obedience** that identifies us with Christ. We are doing what Jesus did (Matt. 3: 13-17) and obeying what He commanded (Matt. 28-19).
- **a symbol**, a picture of Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). As we go down into the water we remember Jesus' death. As we go under the water, we show Jesus was buried in a tomb. As we come out of the water we show how He was resurrected.

Because water baptism is intended to be a one-time act of obedience it is important children understand the significance of water baptism before they are baptized.

When Should A Child Be Baptized?

The Bible sets no minimal age limit for water

baptism. The biblical pattern is that once someone learns about Christ and receives Him, baptism follows. (Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12)

Before the age of 8 or 9 children typically are incapable of understanding the significance of such a symbolic act as water baptism. They are so literal in their thinking that water baptism may have little more meaning than a dip in the water.

Preschoolers and primaries can be introduced to the significance of water baptism by being taught stories about Jesus' participation in it. (Jesus' baptism as recorded in Matt. 3:1-17) Jesus gave us an example to follow and those who love Him will follow it.

Parents should wait until their children have made a commitment to Christ and are able to understand what baptism means before they allow them to be baptized. Allowing a child to be baptized too soon may rob him of a truly meaningful spiritual experience in the future.

An 8-9 year old who is leading a Christian life and has his heart set on being baptized and has a basic understanding of the meaning and

purpose of baptism is a good candidate for water baptism.

Most 11-12 year olds can grasp the symbolism for water baptism but they must also be taught its meaning and be prepared for it. This age child may still be apprehensive about getting baptized, but the minister can help relieve doubts and anxieties by walking a child through the baptismal process beforehand.

How Are We Baptized?

In public. We are baptized in front of the church to show the congregation that we have personally received Jesus as our Savior.

By immersion. Jesus has already taken away our sins. We are immersed or go under the water to remind us of Jesus' death and resurrection.

In the name of the Trinity. In Matt: 28:19 Jesus told his disciples to baptize people "...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." By being baptized in these names we are saying we have become part of God's family, God is our Father, Jesus is our Savior and the Holy Spirit is living with us.

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IDEAS you can use

Prepare Children for Water Baptism

Win them to Christ. Present the plan of salvation and give the children opportunities to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. Once a child receives Christ he is a candidate for baptism.

Teach them the meaning and purpose of water baptism. Many children get baptized without understanding the significance of what they are doing. It may take place at camp, in a revival or during a regular church service. Baptism, if understood, can have deep meaning and bring spiritual blessing.

Work with them individually. Once a child has received Christ and understands water baptism, contact the parents and child to see if there is an interest in baptism. If parents are believers encourage them to discuss baptism with their child.

Meet with the family. Once you are in agreement with the parents that their children are ready for baptism, hold a brief meeting with the families and the pastor. Have children give their testimonies, review the purpose and method of baptism, get signed parental permissions, and answer any questions. Give information about things necessary for baptism: change of dry clothing, towel, comb or brush, plastic bag for wet clothing, and camera.

Plan with the pastor for a baptismal service. During the service it can be very meaningful for the child to (1) give his testimony (2) answer a question about the meaning and purpose of water baptism.

(Adapted from "Baptism, Foot Washing, Communion and Kids" by Lance Colkmire in Reaching, Teaching, and Pastoring Children, published by Pathway Press.)

Object Lesson: Meaning of the Word Baptize

Materials: clear bowl, red dye, and a piece of white cloth cut in the shape of a person.

Fill the bowl with dye. Explain that the red dye reminds us that Jesus died for our sins, shedding His blood for us. Next, show the cloth "person". Explain the person is pure because he has asked Jesus to take away his sins and come into his life. Now he wants to be baptized to obey Christ's command and to show everyone he has put his faith in Christ.

Place the cloth in the dye, saying that just as the cloth will now become permanently identified with the dye, so we become identified with Jesus when we are baptized. We are "immersed" in baptism--we go under the water--to remind us of Jesus' death and resurrection and to show how He has changed us. (Adapted from "Baptism, Foot Washing, Communion and Kids" by Lance Colkmire in Reaching, Teaching, and Pastoring Children, published by Pathway Press.)

Make A Memory

Baptism is a memorable experience in a child's spiritual life. It is an experience he will want to share with his family. To make it special:

- Suggest the child send invitations to family and friends to attend the baptism ceremony. These could be simple handmade ones by the child or ones

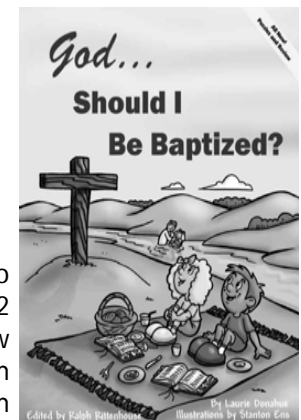
purchased. (Available in Christian bookstores and on the internet)

- Encourage a family member to take a picture and/or video during the baptism so the child will have a visual remembrance of this momentous day.
- Help the child develop a testimony of his salvation experience to share during the baptismal ceremony. A guide for helping the child prepare this testimony is found in the March 2003 (Volume 7, Issue 3) Children's Ministry Newsletter.
- Present the child with a Certificate of Baptism from the local church .

Resource Review

God ...Should I Be Baptized?

by Laurie Donahue
Published by LifeSong Publishers
P.O. Box 183
Somis, CA 93066-0183
Phone: 805-566-5644;
Cost: \$9.99.



A study with easy to read text for kids 8-12 to help them know God's plan for them and to prepare them for a believer's water baptism.

For this book and baptism greeting cards / certificates visit www.lifesongpublishers.com