



# **Preparing for Baptism**

A Guide for Parents and Children

# When Should my Child be Baptized?

## A Guide for Parents

We are so excited that you as a parent want to come alongside your child as they prepare for baptism! For parents, discerning when a child should be baptized can often feel unclear. Admittedly, there are no direct answers to this question in the Bible. But within Scripture we *can* find at least three broad principles that help us know what baptism is, who should be baptized, and when. Take time to prayerfully read this document and respond to the questions in each section.

### 1) Baptism should follow a person's credible profession of faith in the work of Jesus.

Jesus' Great Commission (***Matt. 28:18-20***) makes it clear that part of following him is to follow him into the waters of baptism. As parents, we want to be sure as best we can tell<sup>1</sup> that a child has responded to the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection in their place. Often, kids can be motivated by another desire such as gaining the approval of parents, fitting in with peers, or earning a right standing with God.

There is no magic formula for gauging when a child (or adult for that matter) has put their trust in Jesus. But here are three helpful measuring sticks that summarize the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

- A child must know God; that he is loving and that he has made them for a relationship with himself. They must know God is holy and righteous. A child must see that in their sinful state they are morally deficient and hopelessly unrighteous (Psalm 14 and Ephesians 2:1-3). Unless they understand that God is loving and perfect, they will not understand the second truth they need to know and feel.
- A child must know that they are a sinner, and they must show a Spirit-produced conviction for their sin. Do they come clean when they have not been caught? Does conviction bring them to admit on their own that they have sinned? Do they confess sins that they know they could have gotten away with?
- A child must know that only Jesus can save them. Do they have a child-appropriate understanding that Jesus lived a perfect life that we should have lived, and because He was perfect, only Jesus could die in our place to absorb the wrath we deserved and then be raised again to give us the power to follow him? Can a child put that simple gospel in their own words? Or when asked to describe the gospel do they talk about the importance of being a good person in order to get into heaven?

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<sup>1</sup> In all of this we want to humbly acknowledge that we do not have the ability to confidently discern anyone else's faith. Only God knows our child's heart. But at the same time, real saving faith will produce visible fruit that gives evidence of a child's genuine trust in Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> The following is heavily borrowed from *When Should a Child Be Baptized?* By Brent Prentice; <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/when-should-a-child-be-baptized/>

## 2) Baptism is a symbol of a child's union with Christ.

**Romans 6:3-4** contains some of the most important teaching on baptism in the entire Bible.

*"<sup>3</sup> Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life."*

Here we find that baptism is fundamentally a visible reminder of our participation with Christ in his death and resurrection. Our immersion into the water images both Christ's physical burial and our spiritual death to sin. Likewise, when we pop up from the water we point to Christ's resurrection and our new life with him. Paul describes baptism as a landmark event that can assure Christians that they have been freed from sin and that they will rise again. And this is exactly what we want baptism to be for our children.

Therefore, before pursuing baptism, it is vital to consider, does my child show signs of being united to Christ? Has there been a change from their old life before Jesus to their new life after coming to follow Jesus? Do they want to deepen their relationship with Jesus through prayer, Scripture and being with God's people? When they sin, do they make a habit of confessing to God and resting in the forgiveness he offers?

Our ultimate hope for our children is not that they make a profession of faith at a young age or participate in a ceremony. Those things will never save them, nor will they ensure that our children will follow Jesus as adults. Instead, we want our kids to trust and delight in Jesus long after their baptism. As a result, it's just as important for parents to examine their own motivations for wanting our child to be baptized. Am I seeking to give myself peace of mind regarding their spiritual walk and eternal destiny? Or do I want baptism to be an event that my child can look back on for the rest of their life knowing with confidence that they have been united to Christ?

## 3) Baptism marks one's entrance into the local and global body of Christ.

A third helpful principle to remember is that when our kid is baptized, we symbolically mark their entrance into the people of God (**Acts 2:41; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4-5**). Baptism is a visible sign that lets the rest of the church know that your child is committed to following Christ and serving his people. In addition, at his/her baptism a child is declaring that they take following Jesus seriously enough to invite help, accountability, and encouragement along the way.

Does your child understand, at an age-appropriate level, that by being baptized they are declaring their desire to serve and worship with God's people? What could it look like for them to use the spiritual gifts they have been given to edify others in this body, even at a young age?

## When it is Time...

Baptism is a symbol that should be neither neglected nor rushed. We should talk openly with our children about what baptism means, what it does not mean and its significance. Yet we should also exercise discernment and patience. A hasty baptism does not benefit your child or anyone else.

For this reason, we would encourage parents to wait to baptize their child until he/she has reached the middle-school years. Waiting until a child reaches the age of 12 or 13 could help ensure that they understand the gospel to which they are responding, that they recognize their union with Christ in his death and resurrection, and that they eagerly participate in the life of his body. We certainly don't want to set a precise age on something that Scripture leaves open-handed, and we recognize that there should certainly be exceptions to this general rule. We should be excited when young kids express interest in baptism and eagerly encourage them to take that step of obedience. And yet, we should also patiently help them prepare for baptism.

As you make these decisions with your family, we want to come alongside you. The decision as to when your child is baptized is ultimately one made by the church family. Because baptism is a community event in which the entire body affirms and welcomes a brother or sister officially into the family, the process leading up to a baptism shouldn't be one made in a silo but should be made in conversation with other believers who you and your child trust. Talk with a person in your community group, a youth or children's ministry team member and/or an elder. Pray about the decision as a family and with other believers. Family discipleship is a community project, and we're excited to explore it with you!

## Preparing For Baptism

### A Guide for Children

Read this guide carefully and respond to the discussion questions at the end of each section on your own in writing. Make sure to talk about any questions or concerns you have with your parents.

Once you've completed this guide, please reach out to one of the pastors or the church office to schedule a meeting. During this conversation we'd love to answer any questions you have about baptism and review each of the discussion questions.

This guide will answer four questions:

- ✚ What is baptism?
- ✚ Who should be baptized?
- ✚ How should we baptize?
- ✚ How do I prepare for baptism?

### 1) What Is Baptism?

**Baptism is a special way to show the full salvation we have in Jesus.**

Baptism shows that we've been saved by Jesus and now belong to God. You see, God made us to worship him and enjoy friendship with him. But, all of us have done things our own way instead of God's way. That's called **sin**, and it separates us from God. But God loves us so much that He sent His Son, **Jesus**, to live the perfect life we could never live and take the punishment for our sins by dying in our place!

Then, something amazing happened: **Jesus came back to life!** Because of what Jesus did, we can be forgiven, made clean, and live with God again. When we **believe in Jesus**, we become part of God's family forever.

Baptism doesn't save us—but it is like a **picture** of what Jesus has done for us. It shows three important things:

## 1. Baptism Shows That We've Been Made Clean

When someone is baptized, they go under the water and come back up. This reminds us that Jesus **washes away our sins**—not the dirt on the outside, but the wrong things we've done on the inside. Jesus gives us a **clean heart**.

👉 Bible example: In Acts 22:16, it says, “Be baptized and wash away your sins.”

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## 2. Baptism Shows That We've Died and Come Back to Life with Jesus

When someone goes down into the water, it's like **Jesus dying and being buried**. And when they come up again, it's like **Jesus rising from the dead!** The Bible says that all those who trust in Jesus have been united to him- what is true of Jesus is now also true of us! Baptism is a way of saying, “My old life is behind me and I'm starting a new life with Jesus.”

👉 Bible example: Romans 6:4 says, “Just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too may live a new life.”

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## 3. Baptism Shows That We Are Part of God's Family

When someone is baptized, they're also saying, “I'm part of the Church!” That means they're joining God's big family—all the people who follow Jesus. Baptism is a way of saying, “I want others to help me follow Jesus better and I want to help other followers of Jesus too!”

👉 Bible example: 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “We were all baptized into one body.”

**Discussion:** (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. Why do you want to be baptized?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If a friend asked you to explain the gospel, what might you say?


## 2) Who Should Be Baptized?

**Everyone who truly believes in Jesus should be baptized.**

Baptism is a way to show on the outside what has already happened on the inside—**that we believe Jesus saved us** and that we now follow Him. The Bible shows this over and over again. People believed in Jesus **first**, and **then** they were baptized.

Here are some Bible examples:

- In Acts 2:41, after Peter preached about Jesus, it says, **“Those who accepted his message were baptized.”**
- In Acts 8:12, it says, **“When they believed Philip... they were baptized, both men and women.”**

 You can also read: Acts 10:44-48, Acts 16:14-15 & 32-33, and 1 Corinthians 1:16.

## Baptism Is Not Magic

Getting baptized doesn't save you—**believing in Jesus does**. If someone gets baptized but doesn't believe in Jesus, it's like **wearing a wedding ring without actually being married**. It just wouldn't make sense!

That's why at **Peninsula Grace Church**, people are only baptized **after they show they really believe in Jesus**.

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## How Do I Know If I'm Ready?

Here are **3 questions** to help you know if someone is truly ready to be baptized:

### 1. Do You Believe the Good News About Jesus?

The **good news** is that Jesus died to save us from sin, and He came back to life so we can live with God forever. You don't need big fancy words—just be able to **explain simply what Jesus has done** and that **you believe it's true**.

### 2. Do You Call Jesus Your Lord?

This means:

- You know Jesus is your **King**.
- You want to **follow His ways**, even if you don't always do it perfectly.
- You can say from your heart, "**Jesus is my Lord!**"

### 3. Are You Part of God's Family?

When you follow Jesus, you become part of a big family—**the church!** This means:

- You have Christian friends or family who help you grow.
- You want to **learn with them, serve with them, and follow Jesus together**.

Baptism shows that you're not doing this alone—**you're part of God's team now!**

### **In Simple Words...**

You're ready to be baptized when you can honestly say:

- "I believe Jesus saved me."
- "I want to follow Him as my Lord."
- "I want to grow with His people."

**Discussion:** (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. What or who did God use to draw you to himself?
2. What does it mean to call Jesus, 'Lord'? What makes it hard for you to obey Jesus?
3. What could it look like for you to serve and be served by others in this local church after your baptism? What reservations do you have about this?

### 3) How Should we Baptize?

At **Peninsula Grace Church**, we want to follow **God's Word (the Bible)** in everything we do. That includes how we baptize people.

After studying the Bible, we believe that the best way to baptize someone is to **dunk their whole body underwater**. This might sound a little strange at first, but here's why we do it:

#### 1. The word "baptize" in the original Bible language means things like:

- **To dunk**
- **To sink**
- **To go all the way under**

That's why we baptize by putting someone completely under the water. If God had wanted baptism to be just a little sprinkle, the Bible could've used a different word—but it didn't! So, we believe full dipping is the clearest way to follow what the Bible says.

#### 2. It's a Picture of What Jesus Did for Us

Baptism shows that we've been **joined with Jesus** in His death and in His new life!

- Going **under the water** is like being **buried with Jesus** when He died for our sins.
- Coming **up out of the water** is like being **raised with Jesus** to live a brand-new life!

The Bible says in Romans 6:3-4:

"All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death... so that we too may live a new life."

So, baptism is like a **visual sermon**—a powerful picture that reminds us we belong to Jesus now.

Even when life is hard or we feel far from God, we can **remember our baptism** and know that we are loved, forgiven, and new in Christ.

## What Is Triune Immersion?

That's just a fancy way to say that we dunk someone **three times** during baptism: once in the name of **the Father**, once in the name of **the Son (Jesus)**, and once in the name of **the Holy Spirit**.

Jesus told His followers in Matthew 28:19:

“Go and make disciples... baptizing them in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit**.”

This shows that **God is three-in-one** (we call this the **Trinity**), and each person of the Trinity is important in our new life with Him. That's why our church does triune immersion—because it's a special way to show that we have been saved by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### But Wait... Is It OK If Someone Wasn't Baptized That Way?

Yes! What matters most to Jesus is your **heart**, not the number of times you're dunked. If someone was baptized once, or in a different church, what matters is whether they **truly believe in Him**. If you have any questions about this, you're always welcome to talk to one of our pastors—they'd love to help!

**Discussion:** (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. How does knowing that you have been united to Christ and that God is living in you change the way you view yourself?
2. Are you ever tempted to doubt your relationship with Jesus? What do you think lies behind this doubt?

## 4) How do I Prepare for Baptism?

### Prepare to Share Your Testimony

The word “testimony” can be a familiar one in church circles. At the same time, it can be a word that few of us understand. In a court of law, a person may be asked to share their testimony. There is something this person has seen or experienced that sheds new light on the case. At one point, the crime is shrouded in confusion. The witness is asked to retell what he saw and experienced and this testimony brings clarity.

Everyone is a part of the enormous story that God is writing. A Christian testimony is your small contribution to that grand story. We are not expected to explain everything that God has done, is doing, or will one day do. We are simply given an opportunity to retell what we have seen and experienced from God.

Your testimony is not a theological lesson but rather the story of God rescuing you from your rebellious lifestyle. When preparing to share your testimony with others, we encourage you to think of it in three stages:

1. Before Christ
2. Conversion
3. New Life

It may be helpful to see each of these stages as following the storyline of all great stories: Before, but then, after. The first stage is your opportunity to show others your life before God. What was the great need in your life? What were your failings or struggles? The key phrase to remember is step two, but then...

- I was hopeless, but then...
- I didn't care who I hurt or which bridges I burned, but then...
- I was strung out on drugs, heading for the grave, but then...

The “but then” stage focuses on the ways Jesus met your needs and revealed himself to you. This phrase and the story that immediately follows will grip your audience. We all want to know how and why someone changes. Too often, testimonies skip over the “but then.”

We go from “I was lost” immediately to “I am found and everything is great.” For some of us, this happened in a moment we will never forget. For others, it is a gradual process that takes place over years. In either scenario, there are moments, experiences, or realizations that can serve as landmarks on your journey back to Jesus.

No matter what kind of story we have, we have to believe that it is a story everyone is interested in. People are not necessarily interested in your life, but everyone is interested in the God who takes rebels and makes them family. Every testimony contains a miracle moment--you were dead and God made you alive again!

Finally, talk about what life is like now that you are following Jesus. Don't feel pressure to act like everything is perfect because we all know it isn't. Instead, talk about ways you see God still leading you, desires he has changed, and any evidence of your new life you have seen.

### Testimony Writing Tips

In Acts 26, Paul stood before King Agrippa and shared simply and plainly the story of his life. Paul's testimony followed a guideline that can help you prepare your testimony.

#### Before Christ (Acts 26:4-11)

When writing about this stage of your life, consider the following questions:

- What was your life like before Jesus?
- How did you view God?
- In what ways were you rebelling against God?

In short, consider your pattern of living that made you deserving of God's judgment. If you are struggling with seeing yourself in any of these ways, read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). In what ways have you disobeyed God's design for your life? The more specific you can be about who you were before Christ the more powerful your story will be for others.

#### But then... (Acts 26:12-20)

Share the specific ways God intervened in your life.

- Was there a particular person who consistently shared the gospel with you?
- Was there a particular Bible verse that God showed you?
- What did God use to draw you to Jesus?
- What showed you your need for a Savior?

This is a crucial part of the "sermon" your baptism preaches. You have just finished describing your sinful way of living, and now you get to show how God saved you! In the previous section, you said, "I was deserving of judgment." Here, you are saying, "this is how God saved me!"

#### New Life (Acts 26:21-23)

During the last few moments of sharing your testimony, focus on the difference Jesus has made in your life. Do you find yourself thinking, acting, or feeling in new ways? How has your relationship with Jesus affected other key relationships in your life (marriage, children, family, coworkers, friends)?

Don't feel pressure to act like you have everything together. Being open about struggles you are still facing can be a great encouragement to others. As you confess the trials you are facing, be sure to also acknowledge how your relationship with Jesus affects your struggles. End your testimony with a declaration that you have been given eternal life through faith in Jesus.

#### Testimony Review & Discussion

1. Is your story primarily about your salvation story or something else?
2. Is the hero of your story Jesus and his death, burial, and resurrection?
3. Would someone hearing your testimony be able to understand the gospel?

## My Testimony

My life before Christ:

How I saw my need for Christ:

How I became a Christian:

My life now as a disciple of Jesus:

## Baptism Checklist

- Review this packet titled, “Baptism at Peninsula Grace: A Preparation Guide” and respond to discussion questions.
- Write and edit your testimony (be prepared to share a 2-3 sentence summary of your testimony during the baptism service).
- Schedule a meeting with one of our pastors to review this packet and share your testimony.
- Invite friends and family to your baptism.

### Bring with you:

- Swim trunks/shorts and t-shirt (dark shirt to maintain modesty)
- Change of clothes
- Two towels
- Plastic bag for wet clothes

*On the day of your scheduled baptism, please arrive at the church 30 minutes before the service.  
A pastor will pray with you and walk through the service.*

## Baptism Invite List

Make a list of any non-Christian family, friends, etc. who you'd like to invite. Your baptism is a great opportunity for them to hear and see the gospel.

Make a list of any people who have played an important role in your journey to faith in Christ.