

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Section I: Process of Baptism Preparation	
Overview	3
Why Wait? Is there a minimum age for baptism?	4
Before You Begin	5
Guidelines for Each Session	6
Section II: Goals of Baptism Preparation	
Goal #1: Strengthen the candidate's understanding of the eternal significance of faith and of personal accountability to God	8
Goal #2: Review the Gospel with the candidate and ensure that he has a present trust in Jesus Christ	12
Goal #3: Explore the candidate's assurance of salvation	18
Goal #4: Help the candidate deliver a testimony of how he came to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation	23
Goal #5: Help the candidate understand the meaning and significance of baptism	27
Note of Thanks	30

Introduction

Faithfully preparing a young person to follow the Lord in the obedience of baptism is an important responsibility entrusted to Christian parents and to the church. We believe that parents are responsible for instructing their children and overseeing their spiritual development. The church leadership is responsible to sustain and guard the ordinance of baptism and to faithfully “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:1-3). We believe this “faithful shepherding” includes preparing our young people well. Therefore, it is fitting for leaders of the church and parents to work together in preparing young people for baptism.

Developing this baptism preparation process is the fruit of much work and prayer and comes out of our vision to help parents equip their children to become men and women of God who respond in obedience to the Lord in every area of life, including being baptized. In the past, young people (and sometimes the parents) have simply met with a pastor for about an hour and then been approved for baptism. Even though this was a good experience, we have felt a little uncomfortable with how quickly our young people are hurried into the “dunking pool.”

As a result, we have written this guide to help parents or another spiritual mentor prepare the child for baptism and ensure that he/she is indeed ready to be baptized. The mentor is encouraged to have at least five separate one-on-one sessions with the candidate over the course of six to eight weeks. This guide details the goals and process of leading the young person through each of these sessions. During this time, the mentor determines if the candidate should continue in the preparation process or be encouraged to wait.

Goals of the Baptism Preparation Process

The goals of this process are to:

- Glorify Christ and the redeeming work of the cross
- Help discern the candidate’s readiness for baptism
- Involve the spiritual leader of the home in the preparation process
- Provide the candidate with another opportunity to profess faith in a credible, decisive, public, and memorable way
- Inspire the candidate to live in obedience and faithfulness to the Lord
- Provide an opportunity for the immediate family and the wider community of believers to publicly affirm, support, encourage, and pray for the candidate

As you read through this guide, there are two things that you will want to note. First, we use the term “mentor” with the hope that the candidate’s father will assume this role. Since this is not always possible or appropriate, it is certainly fitting for both parents or only the mother, or a grandparent, or another mature Christian, to assume this role. Second, in order to avoid cumbersome wording, we have chosen to use the masculine pronoun when referring to the candidate. Please understand that we’re using this pronoun generically and that we certainly have both genders in mind.

We pray that this baptism preparation will be a wonderful time for both you and the candidate to see God’s work in his life and to publicly declare it to the church body.

Section I

The Process of Baptism Preparation

Overview

Interest Expressed

Parents of prospective baptism candidates enter the process either in response to a letter of invitation from the church, or in answer to their inquiry about their child's baptism.

Consent Obtained

Candidates under age 18 must gain the consent of their parents before beginning the preparation process. Candidates whose parents are not believers are still encouraged to seek parental consent.

Mentor Identified

Each candidate has a mentor. Most often the mentor is the candidate's father—if he is a believer and living in the home. If not, the candidate's mother, grandparent, or another mature believer may assume this responsibility. If neither parent is a believer, the candidate selects (or seeks help finding) a mentor who can lead him through the preparation process and encourage the young person in his walk with the Lord following the baptism.

Mentor Orientation Session

This meeting is designed to help prepare mentors for their significant role in the preparation process. Mentors usually receive this guide at the orientation meeting.

Mentor's Individual Sessions with Candidates

Mentors are encouraged to have at least five separate one-on-one sessions with the candidate over the course of six to eight weeks. This guide details the goals and process of leading the young person through each of these sessions. During this time, mentors determine if the candidate should continue in the preparation process or be encouraged to wait.

Testimony Night for Mentors and Candidates

During this session, mentors and candidates meet as a group with church leaders. Candidates share their testimonies and review the meaning of baptism. Since baptism is often a first step toward church membership, the meaning and process of membership also may be discussed. At the end of this session, each candidate and his mentor indicate whether or not the candidate is ready to be baptized.

Baptism Interview

After both the candidate and mentor have indicated the candidate's readiness to move ahead with baptism, the candidate may be interviewed at the pastor's discretion to confirm a credible profession of faith and clear understanding of the meaning and significance of baptism. During this interview, the candidate gives his testimony and responds to informal questions concerning faith and obedience to Christ.

Baptism Service

If the candidate is deemed ready by the mentor and church leadership to be baptized, then the candidate's baptism is scheduled for an upcoming service.

Why Wait? Is there a minimum age for baptism?

As a matter of policy, we do not set an age requirement. The Bible does not give us a precise age at which we should baptize children. All that we can biblically infer is that a child must be able to give a credible profession of faith. Therefore, we depend on the candidate's parents (or mentor) to discern when the young person is ready to begin the preparation process.

While we have not established a minimum age requirement for baptism, we recommend encouraging young people to wait until at least age 11 or 12 before beginning this process for several reasons. As parents consider a candidate's readiness to be baptized, there are four things we encourage you to wait for:

1. Wait for Understanding: Children can confess faith in Christ when they are very young but they will likely not be able to contemplate the significance of the baptism until they are older. It is important for children to understand the meaning of the ordinance and also have enough maturity to understand the significance of this act of obedience.

2. Wait for More Independent Thinking: It is not uncommon for those who were baptized during their pre-teen years to feel a need to be "re-baptized" when they are older. Memories of the first decade of our lives are often fuzzy at best. Even if we do remember a decision or an event like baptism, we usually cannot recall any reasoning behind the decision or event. Once a young person has the capacity for reasoning and more independent thinking, he is more likely to embrace the decisions and commitments he makes as his own. Therefore, it is reasonable that we refrain from baptizing a child until he is more likely to remember the experience and more fully embrace the commitment that is represented by this public declaration of faith. We want individuals to look back on this experience with the knowledge that it reflected a conscious and sincere resolve to follow the Lord on their own.

3. Wait for Significance: Encouraging a child to wait until he is more mature reinforces the significance of baptism. This is especially true in a "me-oriented" culture that reinforces a mistaken notion that "if you want it, you can have it and you can have it now". Our hope is that as a child waits, there will be a growing sense of anticipation as the candidate looks forward to following the Lord in the obedience of baptism. Such anticipation can add meaning and significance to the experience when the baptism eventually takes place.

4. Wait for Maturity: The process for preparing a young person for baptism is designed to instruct and encourage young people in their faith. It also is designed to help parents and church leadership discern the candidate's readiness for baptism, including an examination of the spiritual fruit in the candidate's life. As a result, most children younger than age 11 or 12 may lack the intellectual

(understanding meaning and significance of baptism) and spiritual maturity (demonstrating fruits of faith and repentance) to satisfactorily complete the process. In addition, we see baptism as a potential experience in a young person's life that marks the "coming of age" – the time when a person puts "childhood" behind and picks up the mantle of maturity.

Before You Begin

Like most things in life, you and the candidate will get more from this experience if you take time to prepare. Here are three suggestions:

1. Examine yourself and pray

You may not consider yourself to be a shining example of faith to the candidate and thus may feel reluctant to step up to the plate. This job does not require you to be a theological or spiritual "giant," but it does require you to depend upon the Lord's grace which "is sufficient for you" (1 Corinthians 12:9). Paul was one of the greatest spiritual mentors of all time and yet affirmed that his message and his preaching "were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:3), so that his faith was not resting "on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (2 Corinthians 2:4).

Weakness, however, should not be confused with hypocrisy. Obviously you cannot lead a young person through this process if you are not a believer. So first follow Paul's admonition and "test yourselves to see if you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Furthermore, you cannot presume to give spiritual direction to anyone if you are walking in disobedience and deliberately sinning against the Lord. Paul rebukes Roman teachers who taught others but did not teach themselves:

"While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, dishonor God by breaking the law. For as it is written, 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'"

Romans 2:21-24

However, if you are trusting Christ and walking in His ways and waging war against sin and striving to be an example to others "in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity" (1 Timothy 4:12), then pursue this opportunity to encourage the candidate in faith and join with the Apostle Paul who said:

"Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."

2 Corinthians 4:1

2. Enlist prayer support

We can devise and execute a system for baptism preparation and can coax the flesh to cooperate with us. But only God can touch the heart and generate an authentic response to truth. Recognize that God may be pleased to use this time to advance His work and to touch the candidate's heart

(and yours) in a meaningful and life-changing way. Also be careful not to underestimate what the enemy of our faith and our souls may do to oppose this work. Invite at least one or two people who are close to you and the candidate to join you in praying that God would speak to the heart and that the enemy would be thwarted.

3. Plan your meeting times

It is important for you to set aside some time to meet privately with the candidate. This will communicate to him that these times are important and should be taken seriously. Since there are five goals to cover in section II, plan at least five sessions, recognizing that some will be able to breeze through this process in two sessions while others might require twelve. Even though it may be possible to get through the material in one week, we suggest that you spread the sessions out over several weeks.

Establish a regular time and perhaps find a special place to meet with your candidate. We pray that establishing regular meetings will help you in having a consistent time when you can meet with your son or daughter to discuss other important issues of life and faith long after the baptism preparation process is over.

Guidelines for Each Session

There are five major goals in the baptism preparation process. You may choose to make each goal a separate session, or to combine some. This guide will provide you with enough detail to direct you through each session, but is flexible enough for you to lead the discussion in a way that fits you and the candidate.

It is important that you prepare ahead of time. Carefully review the goal for each session and think about how you will guide the candidate through it. Plan for these times to be “eyeball to eyeball,” “heart to heart” discussions. We suggest that you do not bring this guide with you. By preparing your own notes, you will communicate that the things you are saying come from your heart and that you consider these matters serious enough to take the time to prepare. We also encourage you to not go through this guide from rote memory; rather, take time to explain things, ask follow-up questions, and respond specifically to the candidate’s comments and questions.

Make prayer a significant part of each session. Encourage the candidate to pray with you. If you are a parent and prayer with your son or daughter has become awkward or mechanical, you may need to give structure to your prayers. Praying through a particular Bible text is one way to guide the candidate in prayer. There are also helpful formulas like “ACTS” (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) that can help direct you and the candidate in prayer.

Remember that in each session you want not only to influence the “head” but also the “heart.” It is important that the candidate understands the truth. But the response of his heart to the truth is even more important. Be alert to an authentic heart response to the things you talk about.

If the candidate does not have a regular time of personal Bible study and prayer, this would be a good time to begin. Alongside daily Bible reading and prayer, you may want to assign memory work or homework for the candidate to work on between sessions. You also may want to encourage him to keep a journal of thoughts, insights, and highlights gleaned from his personal time in the Word and from these preparation sessions. Consider keeping your own journal to document your thoughts, impressions, topics discussed, questions raised, observations made, and insights gained throughout this process. You may want to spend part of your session time sharing gleanings from your time in the Word and prayer.

Section II Goals of Baptism Preparation

Goal #1
Strengthen the candidate's understanding of the eternal significance of faith and personal accountability to God

Part 1—Introductory Discussion

At the beginning of this first session, it is important to make sure the candidate understands the reasons for meeting and encourage him to describe his expectations for these sessions and what he hopes will come from them. It also is important for you to talk about your expectations and vision for your time together. A few things to cover are:

- Timeline—# of sessions, testimony night, interview with pastor, baptism, membership class (for those old enough)
- What's going to happen at each session (open & honest communication, bible study, prayer, discipleship, Q & A)
- Your support and encouragement for the candidate regardless of whether it's determined he is ready or not ready to be baptized

Here is an example of what you might say:

“This is a time for us to talk about important issues of faith and obedience. I want to make sure you understand the saving work that I believe the Lord has done in your life and to help you put it into words. I also want to help you understand what baptism means and make sure you are feeling ready to move ahead with it. You may come to the end of this time and feel very ready or you may also feel that you want to wait. I want you to feel ready to be baptized but not pressured into it.”

Part 2—Call the candidate to spiritual maturity

Consider the following texts in 1 Corinthians and emphasize that the candidate should continue moving away from spiritual childhood and pursue maturity in Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:11. *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”*

Read 1 Corinthians 14:20. *“Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.”*

Q: What do you think it means to be childish in your faith?

A: A childish person is someone who has not yet matured in his commitment to follow Christ and obey His commands. When you were a baby, you were totally helpless. You could not be responsible for feeding yourself or cleaning up after yourself or keeping yourself warm, because you were physically unable to do those things. Spiritually you also were helpless as a child. You were not

mature enough and your brain was not developed enough to understand sin, your need for salvation, and all that Jesus did to deliver you from sin. Little by little, you have been growing in your understanding of these things so that by now you are fully responsible for acting on the truth you understand. However, if you are still consistently making decisions that go against the commands of Christ, then you are either childish in your faith or do not have genuine faith in Christ.

Q: What do you think it means to “give up childish ways” and to “be mature in your thinking”?

A: A mature believer knows the Word of God and relies upon the Spirit of God in order to love and follow Christ. He studies the Bible, so that his thinking is transformed (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:17-24) and he can discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:12). But then to comprehend and apply the Word of God, he relies upon the power of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual growth is possible only by the grace of God; however, this does not mean we should be passive in the process, or—worse yet—we should seek to pervert God’s grace into an excuse for sin (Romans 5:20-6:2; Jude 4).

Q: It is God’s desire that we mature in our faith and obedience to the Lord. In what ways have you grown in your faith?

A: After you listen to the candidate share his thoughts, consider ways that you can affirm him in areas of spiritual growth. Consider sharing ways that you have matured in your faith recently. Praise God together for how His grace has enabled this candidate and you to become more Christ-like.

Q: In what ways do you need to continue to mature?

A: After you listen to the candidate, help him determine and write down specific ways (spiritual disciplines, character, obedience) in which he can grow as a believer. Share how you need to grow in your walk with the Lord. Then pray and ask God for help in becoming a spiritually mature Christian.

Part 3—Discuss personal accountability to God

The goal in this part of the discussion is to help the candidate understand that even though God is the one who calls us out of spiritual darkness and gives us a heart that can respond to Him, we must personally respond to God in faith and, by His grace, walk in obedience. The candidate now must take responsibility for himself in ways that he could not when he was a little child.

Read Deuteronomy 32:45-47a. *“And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life...”*

Q: According to this passage, what is my responsibility as the parent?

A: As your father (mother, mentor, etc.), I have a responsibility for you and your faith. I am responsible to point you to the Lord and to teach you the truth and to warn you of danger. I am called by God to faithfully direct you to the Lord and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Q: According to this passage, what is your responsibility as the child?

A: While I have a responsibility as your parent to teach and guide you, I cannot respond for you. I cannot embrace the truth for you. This is something you must do, with God’s help and His grace.

Each of us will stand before an infinitely righteous Judge one day and give an account for the life that he lived. I pray that you will respond to my instruction and trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Read Jude 1:24. *“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”*

Q: What is the only way we can stand before God as Judge and be found innocent?

A: When you stand before the Lord one day, being my son/daughter will not save you. Being a member of a church will not save you. Even living a good life will not save you. The only thing that will matter in that moment is whether or not you belong to Christ. With all my heart, I want you to know the Lord and enjoy all the benefits of belonging to Him in this life and in the life to come. But I cannot make that happen for you. Ultimately it depends on the work of God in your life and your response to Him.

Tell the candidate that you will discuss the message of the gospel further at your next session and then end with prayer.

Goal #2

Review the Gospel with the candidate and ensure that he has a present trust in Jesus Christ

As a “baptistic” church, we believe that baptism is rightly administered only to those who have responded to the gospel call, in which they sincerely repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. In addition, we believe that baptism is a visible representation of the gospel and its power in a person’s life (the meaning and significance of baptism is discussed further under goal #5). Therefore, it is important that each baptism candidate have a right understanding of the gospel and demonstrate a continual trust in, reliance on, and obedience to the Lord.

Paul said in Romans 1:16 that the gospel is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” The goal of this session is to clarify and deepen the candidate’s understanding of and appreciation for the power of the gospel in his life. The mentor should present the gospel with the candidate in the format you are most comfortable (so long as it is biblical). In this guide, we provide you with an example to follow if you so desire.

Before getting into the specifics of the gospel message and a candidate’s response to it, remember to keep a few things in mind:

1. A present trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is all that is necessary for salvation. While it is important to grow in our understanding of and relationship to the Lord, we should not expect a treatise on atonement as evidence for salvation. Christ makes it clear that a child-like faith is what God requires—“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Mark 10:15)
2. However, we also should not oversimplify the gospel message for children and downplay its demands or leave out key aspects because we believe it’s too hard for a young person to understand. Like adults, children must comprehend the gospel clearly and commit to it wholeheartedly before they can be saved. Though you may use simpler language, children should be able to grasp basic concepts, such as good and evil, sin and punishment, repentance and faith, God’s holiness and wrath against sin, the deity of Christ and His atonement for sin, and the resurrection and lordship of Christ. *Oversimplification is a greater danger than giving too much detail to children.*
3. Look for opportunities to review/point to the gospel with the candidate outside of this session. This helps you make sure the candidate has grasped the essential truths.
4. Take time to glory in the gospel with the candidate. This session should not simply be a restating of the gospel facts. Instead, it should be an opportunity to revel in the gospel and its power to save sinners who are lost and without hope. Let the candidate see your emotion and that the gospel is something you cherish.
5. Take your time in completing this goal. You may decide that one session is not enough time.
6. In discussing the gospel message, the candidate will most likely ask questions related to assurance of salvation. This topic will be covered in goal #3.

Part 1—Find out how much the candidate understands

Begin the session by asking the candidate about his understanding of the gospel. Here are some sample questions:

- What is your understanding of the gospel?
- Why did God make us?
- What is sin? What are the consequences of a sinful heart?
- Why did Jesus have to die?
- What must we do to be saved?

You do not need to look for an airtight theology; simple faith with limited understanding is okay for now. You mainly want to see what the candidate already understands so you can build on it. Also, these questions may motivate him to pay closer attention to your answers as the discussion continues.

Part 2—Review the gospel with the candidate

As stated above, it is up to each mentor how he would like to discuss the gospel message with the candidate. Below is a presentation of the gospel using Romans 3:23-25a as the primary text and a couple of illustrations (colored beads on a bracelet or the wordless book; bridge diagram) to help the candidate visually “see” the gospel.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 3:23-25a

1. God created us for His glory.

(Show Gold Color to remind children of God’s glory)

Verse 23 talks about the glory of God.

Q: What is the glory of God?

A: “The glory of God is the total of all that God is, all that God says, and all that God does. God’s glory is the manifestation of His marvelous character. Everything about God is glorious, and this glory is eternal.” (quote by Warren Weirsbe) God desires to show His glory to His people, so that we will worship and enjoy Him forever.

Q: In verses 23-25, what are some things we should give glory to God for?

A: verse 23—God alone is perfect; verse 24—God is righteous and just (right to punish sin); gracious; redeemer (pays punishment for our sin); verse 25—merciful (does not punish people who believe in Jesus)

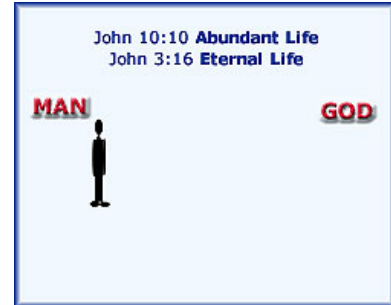
Q: Read Isaiah 43:6b-7. “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” What does it mean to be created for God’s glory?

A: God made us to see Him as being the most treasured one, as the most glorious one, as the one who alone should be praised. He wants us to magnify His greatness—the way a telescope magnifies the stars. Our greatest enjoyment should be putting His character (all that He is—His goodness,

truth, beauty, wisdom, justice, etc.) and works (all that He says and does) on display. He wants us to enjoy Him, take great delight in having a relationship with Him, and be satisfied with Him more than anything or anyone else.

Bridge Diagram, Part 1:

God's Purpose—God desires that we experience an abundant life through a relationship with Him both now and forever.



2. All of us have failed to glorify God as we should.

(Show Dark/Black Color to remind children of our darkened, sinful hearts)

Q: What does verse 23 mean when it says that “all have sinned sin and fall short of the glory of God”?

A: It means that no one has rightly treasured and given God the glory He deserves. Because of our sinful hearts, we have sought satisfaction in other things and treated them as more valuable than God. Sin means to miss the mark, and we have missed the target of honoring and enjoying God the way He created us to.

Q: What are some ways you have a sinful heart?

A: After listening to responses, make sure the candidate not only lists “bad deeds” but can trace back his sinful behaviors to his sinful heart. The candidate should understand that even “good behavior” can come from a sinful heart (Matthew 23:27). For example, a child may memorize a verse because he desires praise at church (pride) rather than because he loves God’s Word.

Q: Read Romans 6:23a. “For the wages of sin is death...” What is the punishment for our sinful hearts?

A: Because we have belittled God by preferring other things above Him, He is just in shutting us out from the enjoyment of His glory forever. We deserve to go to hell, an awful place of pain, darkness, and hopelessness that never ends.

Bridge Illustration, Part 2:

Our Problem—We chose to be satisfied with things other than God. We deserve eternal death (separation from God) and can never reach God on our own strength.



3. God sent His only Son Jesus to provide eternal life and joy.

(Show Red Color to remind children of Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross for our sins)

Gospel means good news, and the most wonderful news is found in verses 24-25a—we “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood.”

Q: What do these verses say Jesus did?

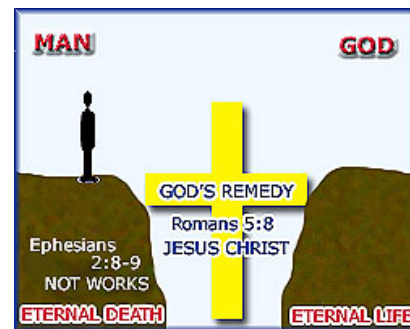
A: Jesus died on the cross for sinners like us. He delivered us from death (redeemed us) by paying the price for sin. He took our place and endured God’s just punishment for our sin (propitiation means God’s righteous anger is satisfied). Then Jesus rose physically from the dead to validate the saving power of His death and open the gates of eternal life and joy.

Q: What does it mean to be justified?

A: Justified means that we who are sinful are declared righteous and do not have to endure the penalty of death that we deserve. We have right standing with God and get to spend forever with Him, because He sees Jesus’ perfection instead of our sin.

Bridge Illustration, Part 3:

God’s Remedy—In spite of the fact that we have turned our backs on God, He has provided a remedy so that we can know Him personally. God sacrificed His Son Jesus to pay the price for all our sins and bring us to God. Jesus conquered death and is the only way for a person to come to God.



4. The benefits purchased by the death of Jesus belong to those who repent and trust in Him.

(Show Light/White Color to remind children of how God changes and cleanses our hearts when we turn from sin and trust in Jesus)

Q: How are we justified so that we can enjoy God forever?

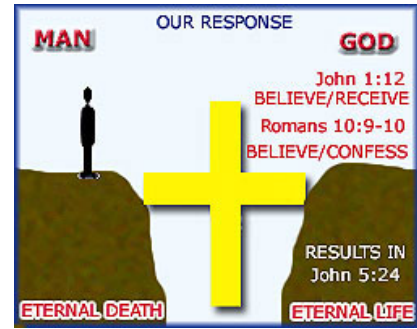
A: Verse 24 says that we are justified by God’s grace as a gift. This means that we cannot earn God’s favor by our works. Verse 25 says we receive this gift by faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says we are saved by “grace through faith”.

Q: What does it mean to have faith (or believe) in Jesus?

A: Faith is trusting completely in Jesus’ work alone to save you from your sins. But this faith is not merely agreeing with the truth of a doctrine, for even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). Saving faith is a profound change of heart that leads to a change in behavior. It goes hand in hand with repentance (Acts 20:21; Mark 1:15; Hebrews 6:1). Repentance is turning from sin and unbelief and turning towards faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in Him alone for salvation and following Him completely. Acts 3:19 puts it this way: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.”

Bridge Illustration, Part 4:

Our Response—Jesus has made it possible for us to experience the full life that God wants us to have. Real belief in Christ results in an active response on our part. John 1:12 says that we must believe in Jesus and receive Him as Lord of our lives, following Him every day.



5. Each Christian must make a life-long commitment to trust, obey, and grow in seeing Jesus as more satisfying than anything else.

(Show Green Color to remind children that they must grow in their relationship with God.)

Q: Read Romans 6:22-23. *“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* **When we trust in Jesus, what have we been set free from and set apart (sanctified) for?**

A: When we are set free from sin and death by placing our faith in Jesus, God sets us apart for His glory and service to Him. By the grace of God at work in our lives, we become increasingly more satisfied in enjoying Him and His work, bearing fruit for His kingdom. As John Piper says, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

6. We will enjoy God forever.

(Show Gold Color again to remind children that we will spend forever with God in heaven)

Q: Read Revelation 21:3b-4a. *“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more...”* **What do we get to look forward to?**

A: We will enjoy a perfect relationship with God and with His people. Our greatest desires will be met in Him.

Part 3—Bring the candidate to a decisive affirmation of His commitment to follow Jesus Christ

After reviewing the gospel with the candidate, it is important to establish a time when the candidate once again consciously expresses his desire to renounce and repent of sin and embrace Jesus as Savior and Lord. Explain to the candidate that he has come to the point in the process where you would like for him to affirm his desire to trust and obey Christ.

Q: Read Matthew 16:24. *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.’* **Ask the candidate the following 3 questions:**

- 1) Is it still your intention to trust Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins and for the fulfillment of all His promises to you, even eternal life?**
- 2) Do you renounce Satan in all his works and all his ways?**
- 3) Do you intend with God’s help to obey Jesus’ teachings and to follow Him as your Lord?**

Encourage the candidate to pray and express his resolve to the Lord in his own words. Below is a sample prayer to give some direction.

“Dear Jesus, now that I am older and have heard the gospel again I understand better the seriousness of my sin and I still desire to turn away from my sin and trust you for forgiveness and to follow you wherever you lead me.”

You also might want document this moment on a piece of paper or in a Bible.

“On this day, after my father reviewed the gospel with me again, I declare that I am trusting Jesus alone for the forgiveness of my sins and the hope of eternal life, and it is my sincere desire to follow Him in obedience all the days of my life.”

Goal #3

Explore the candidate's assurance of salvation

Young people who have grown up in the church with a Christian upbringing and have experienced early encounters with the Lord are often prone to uncertainty with regard to the authenticity of their faith. *“Did I really know what I was doing at age 7 when I accepted Jesus into my heart & prayed a prayer?” “Do I trust Christ because I was taught to do so or because I genuinely trust Him with my life?”* Furthermore, there exists the reality that we, as parents, desperately desire to know for sure that our child's salvation is totally secure. This desperation can occasionally cause us to take any scrap or shred of God's work in our child's life as evidence that he is saved (or we may even try to convince our child that he is saved when our child is not so sure or is not, in fact, actually saved).

The combination of a child's understandable doubt with a parent's understandable (though sometimes self-centered) desperation to know for sure that his child is saved should lead us to a conviction that time needs to be spent with the young candidate undergoing a more exhaustive exploration of the evidence of his salvation. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul actually mandates that we test the legitimacy of our faith: *“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

During this process, encourage the candidate to be open and honest about his thoughts and feelings regarding the Lord. Assure the candidate that no sincere question is a bad or stupid question. The goal here is to help him discern the authenticity of his faith and, thus, help to strengthen it if his faith is proven to be genuine.

Part 1—Discuss outward and inward spiritual realities

Read Isaiah 29:13. (cf. Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:6-7) *“These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”*

Q: Repeat back to me in your own words what you think God is saying in Isaiah.

A: The people were worshiping God “outwardly” but not “inwardly”. God is most concerned about our heart attitudes in worship.

Q: Why do you think people would go to the trouble of honoring God with their lips but not mean it?

A: Some possible answers:

- Because they wish to look good, religious, holy in front of others.
- Showing my religiosity (on the outside) may help me become convinced that I am religious/faithful (on the inside) and that: “Of course God loves and accepts me! I'm honoring Him, aren't I?”

Read 1 Samuel 16:7b. *“God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* **Another reason people may honor God with only their lips is people are often okay with me telling them one thing but meaning another.**

Q: BUT what does the verse in 1 Samuel say that God values?

A: 1) What's in the heart; our hidden motives.

2) Plus, unlike other humans, He *always* sees them.

EXPLAIN: God most definitely looks at the heart when it comes to your salvation as well. Religious behavior & religious words is not necessarily good evidence of genuine faith.

Part 2—Explore evidences of salvation

We understand that God must do a work in our heart in order to be saved. As we examine God's work in our hearts, the tendency is to only look at past experiences as evidence for our salvation. However, what does the Bible say about evidence for salvation?

OPTIONAL QUESTION for more mature believers: Are you saved in the past or the present?

A: The answer is BOTH. There is a tension here.

- Past: Read John 5:24. *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*
- Present: Read Philippians 2:12-13. *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"* (cf. 1 Peter 1:9; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:10).

→ Just as we have been saved and are being saved, so too evidence of such a salvation *has been* and *is being* produced.

Start by giving the candidate a chance to list/guess what the Bible says are evidences of a person's salvation.

After compiling a list, go through the biblical evidence listed below. Feel free to skip around so that your discussion goes in the same order as the candidate's answers. While we have listed many evidences, keep in mind that there are two broad categories under which all evidences fit under: 1) the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and 2) a continual trust in Jesus Christ.

As you begin, state the following: "In going through this evidence for salvation, I would like for us to examine God's work in our lives according to these criteria and praise Him where we can see His work."

1) Is the Holy Spirit present and at work in my life?

The most clearly-stated biblical evidence of our salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Read 1 John 3:24b. *"And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us."*

Read 1 John 4:13. *"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."*

[Before proceeding, wait for a moment to see if the candidate asks the next question before you even ask it]

Q: So how do you know if the Holy Spirit is in you?

A: #'s 2-7 consist of evidence specifically of the Holy Spirit, whose presence is evidence of our salvation.

2) Am I producing any fruit of the Spirit?

Read Galatians 5:22-23. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

Q: You may feel like you had some of these things *before* you trusted Christ for salvation. Do you feel like any of these fruit have been added by the Spirit *since* trusting Christ? Share.

A: After the candidate shares, give some examples of ways that you have seen the candidate

demonstrating fruit of the Spirit.

3) Am I sustaining a life of obedience?

Closely related to producing fruit is living a life of obedience. If we are born of God, then we will obey His commands.

Read 1 John 2:4-5. *“Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.”*

OPTIONAL QUESTION: What is the difference between producing fruit & obeying?

Read John 15:5,10. *“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing...If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”*

A: While fruit is something that springs from a life submitted to the Spirit and, thus, is not consciously produced, obedience consists of conscious responses of decision and action in accordance with the Spirit and God’s Word. Say it another way: Fruit comes *automatically* from abiding in the vine; obedience is a *choice* to show that we abide in vine.

4) Am I being convicted of sin?

Read John 16:8. *“And when he [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”*

Q: What does it mean for the Spirit to convict us?

A: “Conviction” means that we feel guilty when we have disobeyed God. This guilt is meant to be temporary as it is designed to immediately drive us to God to receive forgiveness & cleansing (see 1 John 1:9).

5) Do I understand God’s truths when reading His Word?

Read John 16:13-14. (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16) *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”*

Another way to put this question:

Do things seem “to click” when you read God’s Word? Do things you didn’t “get” before start to make sense?

A: Allow for responses and praise God for His work.

6) Do I submit to biblical authority?

Read 1 John 4:6. *“Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*

Q: Talk to me about your heart toward the teaching of your pastors and other church leaders. Do you find yourself constantly rebelling against, angry toward, or totally not interested in what they say?

As the candidate shares, please note the following:

A person who asks questions to better understand church doctrine is to be commended. However, if he is rebellious towards biblical authority, then there is cause for concern.

7) Are powerful acts of the Spirit being accomplished in, through, and around me?

Read John 14:12. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”*

Q: What are some instances/experiences that have happened to you that can only be explained as a work of God in your life?

A: If the candidate is having a hard time, prompt him with some of the following examples: answered prayer, others coming to faith in Christ as a result of his evangelism, another Christian grows through his discipleship efforts, sinful habits are healed, physical healing, exercising spiritual gifts.

EXPLAIN: Do not think that you always have to be experiencing or seeing God's power in, around, and through you. However, it is important that you see evidence of God's work at least on an occasional basis and that your faith is neither mere ritual nor dead. God's power is absolutely necessary for salvation, strength, etc. (Romans 9:16).

EXPLAIN: God's power doesn't always have to do with the miraculous. It might simply be the power God supplies to do good works. If further guidance is needed, consult the following Scriptures: 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Timothy 3:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Corinthians 4:20

8) Do I have a present trust in Christ for salvation?

Trust is the most crucial piece of evidence of the authentic work of salvation. Even if fruit, obedience, understanding of Scripture, and much of the above appear, these are not of the Spirit if they do not spring from faith/trust.

The Apostle Paul spoke to the Romans about making hard decisions where God gave permission to do one thing or the other. He then went on to say: *"For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23).

Those things you do can appear religious and of the Spirit, but if they aren't done out of faith that Christ is your Lord and loves you passionately, then it is actually SIN!!

Let me share with you from my own life an example of something I've done that *looked* religious or holy, but in reality I didn't do it by faith. Rather I did it to _____. (examples: appear super-spiritual to others, fulfill my obligation, out of habit).

Q: If Jesus was keeping score of how you were doing in your relationship with him, what do you think He would *count* for the most points?

A: Read Galatians 5:6. *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count for anything, but only **faith** working through love."* The Apostle Paul says that only ONE thing *counts*; it is our faith in Jesus Christ.

Q: Do you presently trust Christ for your salvation & ongoing sanctification (process of being made more like Christ)? Describe one decision you've made recently in which there were NO good earthly reasons to do what you did – but you did it by faith alone.

Part 3—Examine with the candidate his assurance of salvation

You have helped the candidate fulfill the 2 Corinthians 13:5 mandate to put one's faith to the test. You may have discerned that this person is not ready for baptism. However, due to the breadth of questions, it also is possible that the candidate may feel overwhelmed to the point of doubting his salvation (even if he is genuinely saved). It is your job to pray through this while using God-given wisdom and discernment.

Below are two suggestions you may consider doing if you and/or the candidate are doubting his faith in Christ.

- 1) Help the candidate talk through and review some of his past experiences, which can aid him in seeing a long-term pattern of faith and growth. Try to especially draw out seasons or instances of him personalizing his faith (ie. making faith his own – as opposed to his parent’s faith). Assisting the candidate in looking backwards to see the work of the Spirit in his life may reinforce the assurance that *“he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6).
- 2) Have the candidate interview one or two people who know him well, asking them to discuss evidence of faith in his life. These interviews can be encouraging experiences for the candidate and another way to reveal his genuine faith and growth toward maturity in Christ.

At this point, you and/or the candidate may not see sufficient evidence of saving faith. Perhaps there is an area of rebellion or disobedience against God or of unbelief that has surfaced during your discussion. If this is the case, encourage the candidate to pray and spend time seeking the Lord in His Word – start with the Scripture passages that were brought up in your meeting that were relevant to the candidate’s particular area of rebellion or unbelief.

If the candidate is not ready for baptism, continue to intercede on his behalf with great faith and confidence that God will answer graciously. After all, Christ said: *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you”* (John 15:7).

Goal #4
Help the candidate deliver a testimony of how he came to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation

Before the candidate enters into baptism, it is important that he know how to profess the Lord's saving work in his life. The purpose of this session is to prepare the candidate for *how* to share his testimony and provide him opportunities to do so. During the baptism preparation process, we give the candidate several occasions to present his testimony: once with the mentor in this session, once at the testimony night in the midst of other baptism candidates and their mentors, once if the candidate has a follow-up interview with the pastor, and once at the baptism service.

To begin preparing for it, let us start with God's Word. The Apostle Paul, throughout the New Testament, frequently shares testimonies of God's ongoing deliverance, mercy, and reconciliation in his life (cf. II Cor. 1:8-11; II Cor. 12:1-10; Gal. 2:1-14). He also specifically testifies twice in the Book of Acts as to his initial encounter with and submission to the risen Christ (Acts 22:1-21; Acts 26:1-29).

Using the Acts 26 passage as a model, you will help the candidate prepare his testimony. Please note that during the meeting, we ask you the mentor to share your own testimony of salvation using Acts 26, so make sure that you are prepared ahead of time.

Step one: Explain that the goal of this session is to help the candidate prepare his testimony. At the end of this process, the candidate should be able to both further trust in God's saving work in his own life *and* proclaim the gospel through his testimony—especially among those who do not yet believe.

Step two: Read Acts 26:1-29 all the way through. Allow the candidate to ask questions for clarification. If need be, go back and read Acts 9 so the candidate can gain a fuller understanding of Paul's testimony.

Step three: Having a pen/pencil as well as a few sheets of paper prepared, help the candidate work on his testimony.

Before Preparing the Testimony:

Have the candidate summarize again the gospel message (maybe review Goal #2). This will help the candidate make sure his testimony is not "I, I, I" but "God, God, God." *Our testimony is about God coming to us and not us coming to God.*

1) Preparation Statement (Acts 26:2-3)

In response to the gospel message, have the candidate summarize in one statement either the particular need he had in life that Christ would fulfill, a character trait of God (eg. His love, discipline, persistence, patience, etc.) that was crucial in drawing the candidate to Him, or someone/something He used to help the candidate entrust his life to the Lord. In doing this, you will help the listener(s) be more prepared for where the testimony is going.

Examples:

- *"Let me first start off by saying that I never wanted to have anything to do with God, but He kept placing*

people in my life who, just like Him, consistently loved me for who I was.”

- *“Giving Christ any more than a small part, or a tiny sliver, of my life was something I was always resistant to because I wanted to be in control. But as I failed on my own, I realized I needed someone more powerful and loving to pilot my life.”*
- *“Even while I felt like other people had let me down my whole life, Christ kept finding ways to pursue me with his persistent love and show me that he would not let me down.”*

Summary: Use a brief statement that will get people’s attention and give them a basic idea of where you’re headed.

2) Life before Christ (Acts 26:4-9)

Have the candidate think back on what things were like before he really trusted in Christ for salvation. Most children who have a Christian upbringing may feel like they do not have a distinctly “un-Christian” life. However, it is important for the mentor to help the child recognize that even in his “good deeds” his heart was not right (ie. went to church, prayed the prayer, etc. but continued to live for self or gave only part of your life to Christ until you really trusted all of it to him).

Examples:

Have the candidate talk about what his relationship with God was like before salvation (eg. Non-existent, enemies, angry, stale, based on a lie—maybe being a good person—, how you related to other people, how you perceived other so-called ‘Christians,’ what kind of a person you were).

Summary: Talk about the reality of the sin nature and provide a couple examples to illustrate the sinful, darkened heart without Christ.

3) Expectations and/or Misconceptions (Acts 26:9,11)

Have the candidate share about his wrong thoughts about Christianity, what it meant to be a ‘follower of Christ,’ and about the church. Paul was “*convinced* that he ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (26:9). Of course, he was convinced wrongly. How were you convinced wrongly?

#2 and #3 often go together or are interchangeable.

4) What God did (Acts 26:13-18)

Declaring God’s work in a person’s life is the climax of the testimony. Have the candidate condense this statement down to one main sentence. He may even want to repeat it again at the end of #4 for emphasis.

Then, have the candidate elaborate a little on what God did exactly or on the theme of what He did over a period of time. It may also be helpful to talk about *how* He did it.

Examples:

In this section, answer questions about how God worked, such as: Through whom? Under what circumstances? How were you feeling or thinking during that time or right before God started to do something?

5) Heart’s response to God (Acts 26:15,19-21; cf. Acts 22:9)

The candidate should give a brief account of his preliminary response to what Christ was doing in and for him. Perhaps discussing the responses (or lack thereof) of friends and family might be appropriate (cf. Acts 22:9).

Examples:

In this section, answer questions such as: Were you scared? Waffling back and forth between belief and unbelief (see Mark 9:23-24)? Joyful? Ready to take on the world? Confused? Not really knowing what was going on? Or thinking one thing was going on when, upon looking back on it later, Christ was doing something different than what you thought?

6) The Result (Acts 26:19-23)

The candidate should give an account of how he was affected and changed by what Christ was doing and *continues* to do in and for him.

Examples:

- *“I began to see people differently after Christ...”*
- *“I started to relate to God more as a Father after I learned...”*
- *“I began the slow process of breaking a sinful habit after Christ...”*

Remind the candidate that we don’t always see the results at first. If this is the case, say, “God is slowly helping me...”, or “I am just starting to learn to trust God...”

7) Hopeful Future Results for candidate and for listeners who respond to the Gospel

Message (Acts 26:24-29...esp. v.29)

#6 should flow nicely into #7. Also, as in Acts, it can provide a good opportunity to more directly confront the listener(s) with the gospel.

The candidate should talk about how what Christ did or showed the candidate is already affecting his life. In addition, the candidate should discuss his hopes of what his life with Christ will look like in the years to come.

Examples:

Answer questions like:

How do you hope that what Christ did/showed you will continue to affect your relationships at home? How do you hope it affects your relationships with old friends or with persons who don’t yet have a relationship with Christ? How do you hope it affects the way you relate to other believers? How do you hope it affects your place in and service to your local church?

Have the candidate close by sharing how he desire others to find the same hope in Christ. This is a good opportunity to summarize the gospel message.

Note on Using Scripture

We greatly encourage you to add a Scripture(s), parable, story, etc. from the Bible. If it’s one or two verses, encourage the candidate to memorize it. It can be a Scripture that encouraged him during the time, a story or parable that relates to the testimony, etc. However, don’t force something in that doesn’t belong. Have the candidate search the Word and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

You can enter the Scripture(s) where it seems most effective. It may be in step #4, step #6, or at the end.

In Conclusion

You have helped the candidate finish preparing. Now share your testimony with the candidate first and allow him to bless you with his testimony. Remind the candidate that doing this exercise was to help him organize his testimony in a way that someone can follow. He does not have to recall the exact words or even exact order – but encourage him to practice it so as to get in a good ‘groove’ for presenting it to others.

Encourage the candidate: It’s worth practicing a little *now* for the exhilaration of the Spirit’s using it in someone’s life *later*.

Goal #5

Help the candidate understand the meaning and significance of baptism

Before you talk about the meaning and significance of baptism with the candidate, it is important to know three of our church's beliefs and practices regarding baptism.

- We believe that baptism is rightly administered only to those who have responded to the gospel call, in which they sincerely repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47-48).
- We do not believe that baptism is necessary for salvation (Acts 16:31; Luke 23:43), but that it is necessary if we are to be obedient to Christ (Matthew 28:19).
- We believe in baptism by immersion, in which a believer is put completely under the water and then brought back up again out of the water (Mark 1:5,10; Acts 8:38-39).

The goal of this session is to ensure that the candidate has a clear understanding of the meaning and significance of baptism. Because this chapter is written with common questions and answers related to baptism, you do not need to go through these Q & A's in order. Instead, we encourage you to ask the candidate to state what he already understands about baptism and then what questions he has about baptism. Then, using the information provided below and other bible passages, affirm what is true and fill in what is missing.

Q: Why does our church “dunk” (immerse) people in the water rather than sprinkle or pour water on them?

Read Mark 1:9-11. *“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’”*

Read Acts 8:35-39. *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.”*

A: There are two main reasons. One reason is that immersion was the way believers were baptized throughout the New Testament. The Greek word *baptizo* used in these passages literally means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water. Both Jesus and the Ethiopian were baptized by being put completely under the water and then brought back up out of the water. It also is interesting that the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized when he saw a body of water. He apparently did not think that sprinkling or pouring water from a container in the chariot was enough to constitute baptism.

A second reason is the symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion. (Note: There is further discussion of baptism's symbolism in a later question.)

Q: Why should I get baptized?

Read Matthew 28:18-20. *“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”*

A: Believers should be baptized because Christ commands it. In some of Jesus’ last words on earth, He tells His disciples to make more disciples, baptizing and teaching them. As believers, we are called to obey the Lord, and baptism is an act of obedience to Him.

Read Matthew 3:13-17. *“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”*

A: We also should be baptized in order to follow the Lord’s example. Jesus identified Himself with John the Baptist’s message that believers must repent (turn from their sins) and trust in God’s Son to be forgiven. When we are baptized, we follow the Lord in not only being baptized but also agreeing with this message.

Finally, we should be baptized because it is a proclamation of the gospel. See the next Q & A regarding the symbolism of baptism for more explanation.

Q: What does baptism symbolize?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. *“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”*

A: Baptism symbolizes the message of the gospel: the death and resurrection of Jesus for sinners. When a believer goes down into the water, it is a picture of Jesus going down into the grave and being buried. Coming up out of the water is a picture of Jesus being raised from the dead. By being baptized, the candidate visibly proclaims this gospel that Jesus died, was buried, and then rose again from the dead.

Read Romans 6:3-4. *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”*

Or Read Colossians 2:11-14. *“In him [Christ] also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”*

A: Baptism is a symbol of what God has accomplished in the life of a believer. According to both these passages, baptism shows a believer's transition from spiritual and eternal death to spiritual and eternal life. It is moving from hopelessness into hopefulness, from darkness into light, and from slavery to sin to freedom in Christ. In baptism we symbolically express our acceptance of death with Christ, putting an end to our old way of life and rising with Christ to begin a new kind of life in Him.

Read Titus 3:5-6. *"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior."*

Or Read Acts 22:16. *"And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name."*

A: Baptism is a symbol of washing and cleansing from sin. When we place our trust in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, God gives us life and cleanses us from all sin through the Holy Spirit. Baptism then is a picture of this washing, purification, and cleansing.

Q: Is baptism necessary for salvation?

Read 1 Peter 3:21. *"Baptism...now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

A: According to the Apostle Peter, the baptism that saves is not an outward, physical act of removing dirt from the body, but an inward, faith-driven act in which a person appeals or cries out to God for salvation through the work of Jesus Christ.

Q: Why does our church only baptize believers and not infants?

Read Acts 2:41a. *"So those who received his word were baptized..."*

Read Acts 8:12. *"But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*

Read Acts 16:29b-34. *"...he [the jailer] fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God."*

A: Each of these narratives suggests that baptism was administered only to those who gave a believable profession of faith. After Peter's sermon at Pentecost, people who received his word and placed their faith in Christ were baptized. Likewise, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, men and women who believed in this good news and the name of Jesus Christ were baptized. In Philippi, the jailer and all the people in his household "believed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" and were baptized. Since infants do not yet have the capability to place their faith in Jesus Christ, we do not believe they should be baptized.

(Note: Some say that the household baptisms in Acts 16:15 and 16:33 and 1 Corinthians 1:16 included infants. However, in both Acts accounts, we only know that the gospel was preached and that people believed. Plus, the households most likely included servants living in the home, not just family.)

Note of Thanks

We would like to express our appreciation to the staff at Bethlehem Baptist Church, who graciously allowed us to use excerpts from their *Preparing Young People for Baptism Mentor's Guide*. Other resources used for this guide are Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* book, the Navigator's *Bridge Diagram*, Child Evangelism Fellowship's *Wordless Book*, Grace Community Church's *Evangelizing Children* pamphlet, and John Piper's *Quest for Joy* tract.