



Dear Parent or Guardian,

What an incredible privilege it is to walk with your child as they consider this important step of baptism. Baptism is a biblical and beautiful celebration that Jesus has given His church to remember His faithfulness and declare our commitment to Him. At Redeemer Church, we get excited about baptism—it's something to celebrate and rejoice in! We also get excited about walking with parents and caretakers as they determine if their child is ready for baptism.

That's why we've created this resource. As your church family, we want to equip you to understand the biblical teaching on baptism and share it with your child. We also want to give you some practical questions you can ask your child as each of you prayerfully consider if baptism is the right next step.

As you work through this guide, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions. Once again, we are so glad you've chosen to shepherd your child through this important question of baptism.

Sincerely,

Redeemer Staff and Elders

Start with Jesus

Before we dig into the beautiful subject of baptism, it's important to say up front: baptism does not save us. The Bible is clear: there are no good works—including the good work of baptism—that bring us into a saving-relationship with God. Instead, the Bible calls us to place our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ as the only hope for our salvation. The following passages make this clear:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.
— Ephesians 2:8-9¹

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 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, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. — Titus 3:4-7

As you walk through this conversation with your child, we think it's important to focus your attention on the question of *salvation* before you talk much about *baptism*. In other words: start with Jesus. Jesus is the center of the gospel and He's the one we proclaim in the waters of baptism, so it's important for us to start with Him and do our best to ensure that our children have a genuine relationship with Jesus before they move forward in baptism.

Of course, we want to affirm our child's desire to be baptized. We want to tell them, "I love that you want to be baptized!" and "I'm so glad you're thinking about this!" At the same time, we want to do our part to make sure they have a relationship with Jesus and grasp the basic nature of baptism before we move forward.

To help you do this, you may consider using some form of the following questions:

- Why do you want to be baptized?
- What do you think it means to believe in Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus died for us on the cross? Why is that important?
- How long have you been thinking about this decision?
- Would you feel comfortable sharing your desire to follow Jesus with others?

You'll notice that each of these questions are open-ended. We think these kind of questions are best, because they allow for a child to explain their own reasons for wanting to be baptized. The goal here is not theological precision. Rather, the goal is to give your child a chance to share their testimony of God's grace. It will also give you a context for determining if baptism is the right next step or if you need to spend more time talking about what it means to trust in Jesus for salvation.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

If you determine that your child is not ready for baptism, there's nothing wrong with saying, "Let's spend some more time talking about what it means to trust in Jesus. This doesn't mean you won't ever get baptized. It just means I want you to feel confident about your relationship with Jesus before you take that important step." As you continue this part of the conversation, you may consider walking with your child through classic gospel-passages like: Mark 1:14-16, John 3:14-18, Ephesians 2:1-10, Romans 5:6-10, etc.

Once you determine your child is ready for baptism, then feel free to use the remainder of this guide as you need to.

Believer's Baptism

At Redeemer we practice what is known as *believer's* baptism. This means we believe that only believers in Jesus are eligible for baptism. This is the pattern we see in the Scriptures: people hear the gospel, respond through repentance and faith, and are baptized. Even though we love and respect our brothers and sisters who practice infant baptism (eg. Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist), we believe the Scriptures consistently teach that only believers in Jesus are to be baptized (see Acts 2:38-40; 8:26-40; 16:30-34; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 12:12).

Additionally, we believe that biblical baptism is practiced through the full immersion of someone in the water. In fact, the word we translate as *baptism* is the Greek word *baptizó* and literally means "to plunge, dip, [or] immerse something in water."² This is how Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-18) and this is the consistent pattern of baptism we see in Scripture.³

Interesting Fact: You (and your child) may find it interesting to know that in the ancient world, people were not the only things being "baptized." This same word was used to describe the process of *making pickles*. When a cucumber was dipped in vinegar, it was said that the cucumber was *baptized* ("dipped" or "submerged") into the vinegar in order to make it a pickle.

At Redeemer, we don't make any pickles, but we love to baptize people! Jesus commanded us to do this (Matthew 18:18-20) and it's something we celebrate! When we do this, we maintain the practice of fully submerging someone in the water. One of the main reasons we do this is because of the symbolism associated with baptism in Scripture (see Romans 6:3-5).

² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 967.

³ Some people are familiar with the household baptisms in the book of Acts (Acts 16:13-15, 28-34, 18:8). Many have used these occasions of household baptism to argue for the practice of baptizing infants. However, none of these passages indicate that infants were included in the household baptisms. One of the accounts specifically says that Paul only shared the gospel to those who could hear and believe it for themselves (Acts 16:30-34). A better interpretation is that the members of the household who were baptized were of accountable age to hear, receive, and respond to the gospel through water baptism. For more on this see Gavin Ortlund, "I Corinthians 7:14 And Household Baptisms," *Truth Unites* (website), January 15, 2014.

In particular, when a person goes under the water, they are representing two things: Jesus' death on their behalf and their own death to their old selves. Conversely, when a person comes out of the water, they are symbolizing the exact opposite realities: Jesus' resurrection on their behalf and their own resurrection to follow Jesus in a new way of life.

We could visualize this symbolism with the following chart:

Going <i>Under</i> the Water	Coming <i>out of</i> the Water
Jesus' Death	Jesus' Resurrection
Death to the Old Self	New Life in Christ

As you unpack the biblical meaning and nature of baptism with your child, it may be helpful to show this chart and explain how each element of the baptism connects to a spiritual reality. As you do so, you may ask them the following questions:

- Do you understand what going under the water represents?
- Do you understand what coming out of the water represents?
- Do you have any questions about any of these realities?

Explaining Baptism

Word-pictures are always helpful. Especially with kids, taking abstract concepts and making them concrete is a very effective method of teaching. The Bible says that Baptism is one of the key ways we publicly identify ourselves as Christians (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-5). As you explain this element of baptism with your child, you may consider using the following word-pictures to help them understand this aspect of baptism:

- *Team Jersey*: If your child plays or watches sports, you may draw the connection between a jersey and baptism by explaining how jerseys publicly display which team someone belongs to. In the same way, baptism is a way to publicly express our commitment to Jesus and belong to His team forever.
- *Megaphone*: If your child has ever heard someone use a megaphone or talk into a speaker, they've heard someone publicly declare something. In the same way, baptism is a public declaration of our relationship with Jesus.
- *Wedding Ring*: If you think your child would connect with the wedding ring illustration above, then share this one!

If you come across some other visuals that depict the public, symbolic, or declarative nature of baptism, then use those! In the end, using a visual can be helpful to connect a child's mind to the nature and purpose of baptism.

What to Look For

Once again, we want to make sure that baptism is the right step for your child. To do that, we think it's important to look for two things when determining if your child is ready for baptism:

1. *Relationship*: Jesus said that everyone must receive the kingdom like a child (Mark 10:15). This means that Jesus doesn't expect us to have a well-formed biblical vocabulary or pass a bible-trivia test in order to receive Him. Instead, we simply open our hearts and receive Him by faith. We place our trust in His death on the cross for our sins. We believe that God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). We recognize that we are sinners in need of a Savior and then we turn from our sin and place our faith in Jesus (Mark 1:15-16).

As best as you can tell, has your child done this? Do they realize they are sinners in need of a Savior? Have they placed their faith in Jesus for salvation? Do they have a *relationship* with Jesus?

2. *Reasons*: Many of us have friends who were baptized at a young age, but they can't explain *why* they were baptized. They may say their friends, family, or church wanted them to be baptized, but they struggle to articulate how this was significant for them personally. As much as we can, we want to prevent this from being the case with our children. Instead, we want our kids to be able to look back on their baptism and confidently say that this was the moment they went public with their faith and proclaimed their relationship with Christ.

Based on your conversations with your child, do they have good, biblical reasons for wanting to be baptized? Can they give a basic explanation of the gospel? Can they give a basic articulation of why baptism is important *biblically*?

Taken together, we think these two things work together to let us know when our children are ready for baptism. You could put it like this: Relationship + Reasons = *Ready*

What Next?

Once you determine your child is ready for baptism, please let your staff contact know or simply send an email to our Redeemer Kid's Ministry Team: kids@redeemerchurch.org.

Once you make contact, a member of our staff can talk with you about an upcoming Celebration Service. At Redeemer, we believe baptism is just that—a *celebration*, not just a ritual. When someone comes to faith in Christ, their baptism is a beautiful way of declaring what Jesus has done in their lives. Nothing less than celebration is appropriate. Celebration Services take place throughout the year and your staff member will know when the upcoming services are scheduled.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to walk through this important conversation with your child. Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His disciples He would always be with them. One of the ways we experience the presence and power of Jesus is through the ongoing testimony of His faithfulness revealed in the celebration of baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). As you consider your child's readiness for baptism, we hope and pray you experience the presence and leading of Jesus as you seek to guide and lead your child to this important milestone in their faith.