

GRACE LIFE STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

We, the elders of the Grace Life Baptist Church, conclude that, baptism is a public confession of faith and is an ordinance give to the church. As such, the church bears primary responsibility for assessing the genuineness of an individual's profession of faith in Christ alone and for ensuring readiness for baptism. A baptized individual will become a member of the church upon baptism and congregational affirmation at a member meeting.¹ Therefore, the *one anothers* we congregationally affirm and commit to in our church covenant should be readily evident to the church before a professing believer is baptized. As this baptism is a church ordinance,

- A Grace Life elder will conduct a pastoral interview.
- the individual should be able to provide an understanding of what it means to trust in Christ.

We believe the church should affirm baptism when the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church community. This would normally be when an individual bears fruit of the Christian gospel (e.g. valuing Christian community, repenting of sin, etc.) For younger believers this would be when they are emotionally maturing and beginning to live more self-consciously as an individual, making their own choices, having left the God-given, intended child-like dependence on their parents for the God-given, intended mature wisdom which marks one who has felt the tug of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but has decided, despite these allurements, to follow Christ.

We do understand that the consideration of an appropriate age for a believer to be baptized is a matter not of simple obedience on an issue clearly settled by Scripture, but rather is a matter of Christian wisdom and prudence on an issue not directly addressed by Scripture.

With the consent and encouragement of Christian parents who are members, we will carefully consider requests for baptism before a child has left the home but would urge the parents to caution at this point. Of course, children can be converted. We pray that none of our children ever know any lengthy period of conscious rebellion against God. The question raised by baptism is the church's ability to affirm that conversion. The malleable nature of children (which changeableness God especially intends for the time when they are living as dependents in the home, being trained in all the basics of life and faith) is a gift from God and is to be used to bring them to maturity. It should also give us caution in assuming the permanence of desires, dreams, affections, and decisions of children. Nevertheless, should the young person desire to pursue baptism we will examine them on a case-by-case basis, with the involvement of the parents. While we understand emotional maturity varies from person to person, we would normally see baptism taking place at the earliest in the late middle school or early high school years.

In conclusion, we understand that this issue is a matter of great emotion for some, and it is a matter of importance for all. Our desire in this statement, as with everything we do, is to shepherd our members at Grace Life biblically and faithfully.

¹ If the individual is under the age of 18, he/she will be a non-voting member of the church until they turn 18.