

SHOULD MY CHILD BE BAPTIZED? BY PAUL S. LAMEY

A wonderful part of church life is the baptism of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and are seeking to follow Him with their life. Baptism is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6: 1–11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41, 42). Baptism is an outward picture of an already present reality in the soul of the child of God.

What should a parent do with a child that professes faith in Christ? Should they be baptized right away? Many parents want to guard against the easy-believism that pervades many churches today. It is common practice in many churches to baptize very young children who have nodded their head or raised their hand in agreement to a few facts about Jesus. On the other hand the Bible does not require a certain age for a believer to be baptized. We believe this is an issue of liberty that requires a great deal of wisdom and patience. With that in mind, consider the following:

- Baptism is only for believers. In regards to children, this means that an infant or any child that has not shown a credible profession of faith should not be baptized. This assertion rests primarily on three evidences from Scripture. First, there is no example or command to baptize infants, not even the children of believing parents. Secondly, believing the Word by faith is always a prerequisite to being baptized in Scripture. Peter says, “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). Paul also connects saving faith with baptism in Colossians 2:12. Lastly, as heirs of the New Covenant (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6) the Bible assures us that all that are in the New Covenant have forgiveness of sins and consciously know the Lord (cf. Jer. 31:34).
- Prematurely baptizing a young child (or even an adult) can lead to a false sense of security. It is important for the child to understand that no work or act can save them from sin (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). One does not need a seminary degree to be saved yet one must have at least a basic understanding and belief of their sinfulness and Jesus’ unique ability as God to save them from their helpless condition through His finished work on the Cross.
- Nothing is lost by waiting to be baptized. Baptism should never be taken lightly or entered into hastily. The child should be taught and encouraged to understand the significance and importance of baptism. An older child may be more thoroughly prepared for baptism through the ongoing guidance of his parents.
- Since the Scripture does not give an age requirement for believers to be baptized, parents should work closely with the leadership of the church to discern the proper time for their child to be baptized. It may be helpful to evaluate the child’s profession over a period of time to see if their commitment to Christ is genuine. While some children may be ready at an early age, some parents may wish to let their child wait until a later time.

Baptism is a wonderful expression of obedience to Christ, the substance of which is at the heart of all parenting (cf. Col. 2:17). Parents should discuss baptism with their son or daughter to determine when they might be ready to follow the Lord in this act of obedience.¹

¹ Paul Lamey, *Should my child be baptized?* (Huntsville, AL: Grace Community Church, 2004).