

When a Child Asks for Baptism

A GUIDE FOR LEADERS

Always affirm the expression of faith in the question. This is the FIRST and MOST IMPORTANT thing! The fact they are asking about baptism is an expression of faith and growing with Jesus. How good! The answer should never be 'no' – only a matter of when.

Ask them what they know about or think about baptism already. Listen and engage in their response and offer to find out more together.

Make a plan (time, place) and have the conversation, do not fob them off or say they need to wait before you can talk with them about baptism. Having the conversation may not result in them getting baptised yet, but it is an important discipleship opportunity that should not be passed up.

Seek to include parents/carers in the conversation as well, affirming to them the faith you see in the young person, and their role in encouraging that faith.

Get clear on your thinking and your churches theology around children and baptism

What is the right age?

Faith development is not merely about age, so there is no magic number. The key question is:

Do they know and understand the good news about Jesus and his kingdom, and what it means to entrust themselves to him as Saviour and submit themselves to him as Lord? Bear in mind, the New Testament accounts suggest many people were being baptised knowing considerably less about Jesus (and his work, words and ways) than many children who have grown up in Christian homes today know. Yet it's not merely about knowledge of Bible facts; it's about having a reasonable and practical understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

Two questions that can be helpful:

"What started you thinking about baptism?" *"Why is being baptised important to you?"*

How do their parents/carers feel about this request to be baptised?

Are the child/ young person's parents supportive or do they have reservations? Are they appropriately enthusiastic or are they exerting some pressure? They spend the most time with their child and usually know a lot about what is happening for them. The question is whether the child is choosing for themselves to receive the life God offers in Christ.

There is no absolute test for this, it's a matter for prayerful discernment, and the key issue needs to be what is best for forming strong and lasting faith.

If you feel that the answer is 'Yes and now'

Before moving straight to the practical arrangements, this is a great time to openly discuss the potential difficulties with being baptised young:

What if they regret being baptised so early in life and it would mean more to them later?

Well, it's a good thing if our baptism means more and more and more to us as we grow older.

A life lived following Jesus is an ongoing submission to him as King. Our prayer is that there will be many more times in this person's life that they commit to going further with Jesus. That won't mean getting baptised again, however, just remembering and confirming it.

What if, as they go through the big changes of teen-age and beyond, they weaken in faith and lose interest in Jesus?

Well, let's get building a good foundation of faith and spiritual formation to guard against that. What habits and practices can you help them form now, to stay close to God and begin a life of ministry and service? What mentoring and prayer support can you put around them to 'water into growth' and 'fan into flames' what God has planted in them?



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If you feel that the answer is 'Yes but not just now'

We want to ensure that this is not experienced as a rejection of their faith, but as an encouragement and spurring on. You can say for some people, baptism happens straight away, and for others who are just as obedient, it takes more time and that's OK.

"I am so pleased you are wanting to pursue baptism. Let's work on making that happen together. Just so you know, getting ready for baptism can sometimes take a while, but we will talk about how we are going to make sure we stay on track".

There are a number of reasons why it might be best to wait, including if their parents want them to wait.

It can be helpful to know that in church history, there were times when new believers were made to wait months or even years to ensure they fully understood the faith and demonstrated a commitment to living a Christian life. This resulted in strong and resilient Christians.

You may find it helpful to name a date and say

"If you're still just as keen to be baptised [at the end of the year / when you turn X etc] then we'll go ahead; you can let me know or I'll check-in to see what you are thinking."

But again, make it clear that it isn't just about waiting out the time. "What can we do to help keep you growing and passionate to follow Jesus?"

If parents weren't part of the conversation, make sure to let them know what you have offered about waiting and checking back in.



Take a look at the booklet
"Exploring Baptism: Going all in with Jesus"
as a guide for discussing baptism with children
and young people.

You will find it in the Crossover Baptism
Resource Hub.

[https://www.crossover.org.au/
exploring-baptism/](https://www.crossover.org.au/exploring-baptism/)

Scan or Click!



**Our goal is life long disciples of Jesus.
Let's do all we can to encourage children and young people in that direction.**