

Is My Child Ready to Be Baptized?

Introduction. Parents sometimes feel stuck between a rock and a hard place when it comes to guiding their children toward becoming a Christian. On one hand, we would never want to cause them to stumble (Matt. 18:6). On the other hand, obedience must be from the heart (Rom. 6:17), so just being able to repeat the plan of salvation doesn't necessarily mean a young person is ready.

This lesson takes for granted that the plan of salvation has been taught to your children, by you or a Bible class teacher, and that they understand these things (Rom. 10:17; John 3:16; 8:24; Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 17:30-31; Acts 2:38). But since it is possible to know the plan, but not obey from the heart, how do I know if my child is ready? Here are some concepts from the Bible that will help you answer this question.

Knowledge. In the introduction, we talked about knowledge of God's plan for salvation, but does your child also have a knowledge of good and evil (Isaiah 7:16)? We frequently refer to the time a young person begins to recognize good and evil as the "age of accountability." Does he or she understand that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that this sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2)? Does your child apply these concepts to him or herself? Innocent children (Matt. 19:14) are not condemned. However, once a child realizes the depth of their sin, and realizes that he or she has such sin that separates from God, perhaps they are ready to obey from the heart.

Faith. Does your child exhibit faith that God can and will save them from the consequences of sin and give them eternal life (Hebrews 11:6)? Do they realize that God is a rewarder, and not just a "punisher?" Obedience from the heart includes faith that God will do what He says!

Commitment. Does your child understand that becoming a Christian is a "forever" commitment, and not just a quick fix for the "sin of the day?" Are they able to "count the cost" (Luke 14:27-33)? Obedience from the heart includes commitment.

Sorrow. Does your child express sorrow for transgressing God's law (2 Cor. 7:10)? Not just a sorrow that they "got caught" disobeying, but a sorrow that they have disappointed God. The men in Acts 2:37 were "cut to the heart" regarding the knowledge of their own sin. Godly sorrow is also a heart issue.

Urgency. Examples of conversion in the New Testament show that believers didn't wait to be baptized. Remember the eunuch in Acts 8 and the jailer in Acts 16. One preacher suggested asking a child if they would be willing to wait to be baptized for a "more special time," such as Christmas or a birthday. If they can wait for such a "special" time, it may be that they do not fully understand what baptism is about. This is a heart issue too. The heart won't wait, once knowledge, faith, commitment, and sorrow for sin coincide!

Conclusion. One of the most wonderful moments in a person's life is seeing those whom they love become Christians. Let's pray for strength to be an encouragement to them always, and to be alert for the signs that indicate readiness to obey from the heart. -Matt Clifton