

A Kids' Club Guide to Baptism

This is a brief guide to help you understand baptism and figure out whether or not your kid's ready for it. Use a Bible to look up the verses listed throughout this guide. (We've also printed them on the last page.)

First things first: baptism is a BIG deal. It's a one-time, grand announcement that you follow Jesus because you believe he rescued you. Except instead of telling people one by one, you show a whole lot of them at once...by getting dunked in and out of water. Kind of like wearing a jersey to show you're a fan of a sports team. Or wearing a ring to show that you're married.

talking to your child

Any person—kid or adult—who gets baptized should understand what he or she is showing others. In kid-friendly terms, baptism is kind of like saying:

I need a rescuer. Everybody has done wrong things. It all started when God told Adam not to eat from one tree in the Garden of Eden. God said, “If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die” (Genesis 2:17). Unfortunately, God’s enemy, the snake, tricked Adam and Eve into thinking God didn’t really love them. So they chose to disobey him (Genesis 3:1-6). That’s when death and all the wrong things in the world began. Adam and Eve eventually died. And now everyone who disobeys God—which is all of us—deserves the same punishment (Romans 3:23).

God sent a rescuer. God created us to love him and be close to him, forever. And he loved us way too much to let death stand in the way of that. So he sent his own, perfect son Jesus—who didn’t deserve death—to take *our* punishment (John 3:16). But Jesus didn’t stay dead; he came back to life. Jesus took our punishment by dying—and got rid of it by coming back to life. Since Jesus beat death, now death can’t separate us from God anymore (Romans 8:38-39).

Jesus is MY rescuer. There’s nothing any of us can do to make up for the wrong things we have done. Even if we do a million good things, it’s not enough (Ephesians 2:8-9). But this rescue is a special gift God gives us all for free. And just like we have to open presents if we want to see what’s inside, we have to decide that we *want* God’s gift. Making that choice is like opening our present! When we do, God sees us as his very own children (John 1:12). That means we are close to him again.

I follow Jesus. Ephesians 5:1-2 says: “You are the children that God dearly loves. So be just like him. Lead a life of love, just as Christ did. He loved us. He gave himself up for us. He was a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.” Leading a life of love in this world full of wrong things is not easy (Romans 8:17). And we’ll definitely mess up sometimes. But ...if we accept God’s gift and do our best to live like Jesus, we will one day live with him forever in a perfect, glorious world, where there’s no sickness or sadness or death or anything bad. And that will be worth the wait (Revelation 21:1-4).

If a person—kid or adult—is ready to make that announcement, here’s why he or she really *should* get baptized:

Most importantly, Jesus wants us to get baptized. After all, he got baptized (Matthew 3:13-17), and following Jesus means doing what he did. Also, he told people to get baptized in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you.” Once we decide to follow Jesus (which is what it means to be a disciple) we should obey him by getting baptized.

Baptism is a picture of Jesus’ rescue. When we go under the water, it reminds us of how Jesus died and was buried—and we choose to get rid of (or bury) our old life of disobeying God and not being close to him. When we come up out of the water, it reminds us of how Jesus came back to life, which got rid of death—and now we can learn to live like Jesus did, and do what he wants us to do (Romans 6:3-4).

Baptism is a picture of how we have been made clean by God. When Jesus rescued us, it was like he wiped away all the wrong things we had done, just like water washes away dirt (Romans 6:23). The water in baptism shows people that we’ve told God we’re sorry for all the wrong things we’ve done. We’ve asked God to forgive us and make us clean through Jesus (Psalm 103:10-12).

Maybe all you really want to know is whether your kid is ready.

Here's the thing: There's no "right" age or action to indicate your kid is ready. It's hard to know exactly when anyone is ready, because baptism is an outward expression of an inward choice to follow Jesus. So let your kid initiate the conversation. Don't force baptism upon him or her or make your kid think it's something that has to be done before a person starts following Jesus; it's not. (Remember Ephesians 2:8-9: there's nothing we can do to rescue ourselves.)

But if your kid comes to you and asks about baptism, talk about what baptism announces to people and why we do it (you can use the outline on page 3). If he or she can express a personal understanding of baptism and still wants to take that step, great! If not, use the discussion as an opportunity to talk more about Jesus and his rescue.

If your child is ready to participate in an upcoming baptism service, you can register by completing the online form at crossroads.net/baptism.

Here are the Bible verses in the order they appear in the guide (NIRV):

Genesis 2:17 But you must not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you can be sure that you will die.

Genesis 3:1-6 ¹The serpent was more clever than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. The serpent said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat the fruit of any tree that is in the garden?’” ²The woman said to the serpent, “We can eat the fruit of the trees that are in the garden. ³But God did say, ‘You must not eat the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden. Do not even touch it. If you do, you will die.’” ⁴“You can be sure that you won’t die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“God knows that when you eat the fruit of that tree, you will know things you have never known before. You will be able to tell the difference between good and evil. You will be like God.” ⁶The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good to eat. It was also pleasing to look at. And it would make a person wise. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. And he ate it.

Romans 3:23 Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God’s glory.

John 3:16 God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸I am absolutely sure that not even death or life can separate us from God’s love. Not even angels or demons, the present or the future, or any powers can do that. ³⁹Not even the highest places or the lowest, or anything else in all creation can do that. Nothing at all can ever separate us from God’s love because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸God’s grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn’t come from anything you do. It is God’s gift. ⁹It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.

John 1:12 Some people did accept him. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God.

Romans 8:17 As his children, we will receive all that he has for us. We will share what Christ receives. But we must share in his sufferings if we want to share in his glory.

Revelation 21:1-4 ¹ I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth were completely gone. There was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ I heard a loud voice from the throne. It said, "Now God makes his home with people. He will live with them. They will be his people. And God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sadness. There will be no more crying or pain. Things are no longer the way they used to be."

Matthew 3:13-17 ¹³ Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River. He wanted to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to stop him. He told Jesus, "I need to be baptized by you. So why do you come to me?" ¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be this way for now. It is right for us to do this. It carries out God's holy plan." Then John agreed. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened. Jesus saw the Spirit of God coming down on him like a dove. ¹⁷ A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, and I love him. I am very pleased with him."

Romans 6:3-4 ³ All of us were baptized into Christ Jesus. Don't you know that we were baptized into his death? ⁴ By being baptized, we were buried with Christ into his death. Christ has been raised from the dead by the Father's glory. And like Christ we also can live a new life.

Psalms 103:10-12 ¹⁰ He doesn't punish us for our sins as much as we should be punished. He doesn't pay us back in keeping with the evil things we've done. ¹¹ His love for those who have respect for him is as high as the heavens are above the earth. ¹² He has removed our lawless acts from us as far as the east is from the west.

Romans 6:23 When you sin, the pay you get is death. But God gives you the gift of eternal life because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done.