



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

There was a day in the not too distant past when people of all ages sat together throughout an entire church service. My earliest memory of a segregated worship format for children was after I was in college, in fact. Up until then, children were somehow able to grasp enough of the message being preached to respond intelligently and sincerely to the invitation of Jesus. They definitely understood what it meant to behave in a respectful manner. Of course, our entire society and culture has deteriorated in every quarter, so I realize the challenge of working with children is greater today.

Our purpose is not to discuss the age-segregated church but to call attention to the fact that a child can understand an adult presentation of the gospel, even when the presenter is one who is not afraid to use multisyllabic words and correct grammar.

We now turn our attention to an eight-year-old young man whose thought processes may go deeper and be more serious than that of many adults. He is precocious, but not in a way that anyone would consider him to be odd. He is a normal child in every respect. He does have the distinct advantage of having parents who nurture respectful behavior and spiritual thought.

This young man wrote a hand-printed note which read (misspellings retained)

Dear Gene,
I want to ask you some questions. What does it feel like to be baptised? What does it feel like to be a follower of Jesus? I want you to answer those questions because I want to plan ahead.

My reply: Thank you so much for your note that asks for my thoughts. Your questions have encouraged me a lot. It is so good to know that you are thinking about these things.

When I was baptized, the feeling I had was one of great satisfaction of knowing I

was doing what God desires. But I also felt very good, knowing that all my sins were forgiven. The feeling good was not something I felt in my body, but it was something I knew in my mind. I knew God always keeps His promises. He promised to wash away all my sin when I was baptized. So I felt good, knowing God had kept His promise and that I became a forgiven person. By the way, I was eleven or twelve years old when I was baptized.

Following Jesus usually feels good. But not always. Following Jesus means that you sometimes go through difficult situations when people say bad things about you or mistreat you. I don't like that feeling. But I know that God always loves me and is happy when I follow Him. It is more important to me for God to be pleased with me than for people to be pleased with me. Following God also feels good because I know it will lead me to be with God for ever and ever. That is the most important thing in life.

I am very happy you are planning ahead. So many people do not. I will be very happy to help you any way I can. One thing you may want to do is to complete the little study you will find at this website: <http://www.abarc.org/Resources/So%20Your%20Child%20Wants%20To%20Be%20Baptized.pdf> Your mom and dad will probably want to work through this with you. I think it will help you in your understanding.

You have really encouraged me. Thank you for letting me be a part of your life.

Your friend,
Gene McCoy, Preacher

If a young person persists in completing the lessons without parental urging, and if the child demonstrates understanding, it is an indicator that the child may be prepared to make a commitment to Christ.

My anticipation is that my young inquirer will pursue this course and will be a committed Christian.

Note: The resource cited, "So Your Child Wants to Be Baptized," is posted on the A.R.M. website (www.arm.org). Rod Farthing is one of the authors. 