

Guidelines Regarding the Baptism of Children

Issued by the Shepherds of Grace Bible Church - January 2020

Baptism is one of two ordinances that our Lord Jesus Christ instructed His church to practice regularly (Matthew 28:19). The physical act of baptism, which we understand to be the immersion of a believer into water (the Greek term *baptidzo* primarily meaning “to immerse” or “to submerge”), is a public demonstration by which a believer in Christ testifies that he/she has died to his/her old way of living and has been born into new life in Christ (Acts 16:14-15).

To be absolutely clear, water baptism is not in any way a salvific work (Titus 3:5), but is rather a *picture* of the spiritual baptism that occurs when the Holy Spirit immerses the new believer into Christ at the moment of regeneration (Romans 6:3; 1 Peter 3:21-22). The New Testament clearly states that there is no act we can do to earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9), including the act of water baptism. It should be noted that the Scripture records examples of unsaved people who had been baptized (Acts 8:13, 23) as well as examples of saved people who were not baptized (Luke 23:43). Nevertheless, though water baptism is a non-salvific picture of God’s saving work in a believer’s life, it is still an important step of obedience to our Lord and must not be taken lightly but rather treated with utmost seriousness.

Given the high view of baptism we see in Scripture and understanding how seriously our Lord treats this act of obedience, *as a rule*, Grace Bible Church will baptize individuals who have a clear profession of faith in Christ and are age fourteen or older. This is not to say that we believe individuals younger than fourteen are incapable of demonstrating spiritual fruit or of being saved, but rather it is an acknowledgement that, in our present culture, it is often evident that someone has truly “counted the cost” (Luke 14:25-34) and has had the opportunity to demonstrate “fruits of repentance” (Matthew 3:8) around the time he/she begins high school.

However, understanding that all souls are different and that the Lord in His graciousness often saves individuals at a very young age (2 Timothy 3:15), we recognize that there may be a situation in which a person younger than fourteen has been genuinely converted and wishes to pursue obedience to the Lord and be baptized as a public profession of his/her faith.

The shepherds of GBC do not wish to hinder such a child in any way. In such cases, the child and his/her parents will be asked 1) to meet with a GBC shepherd to discuss the child’s profession of faith, 2) asked to write out their personal understanding of conversion, repentance and daily following Christ and 3) to read a book such as Gundersen’s book *Your Child’s Profession of Faith*.

After this short season of meetings with a GBC shepherd and after the shepherds of GBC have met, discussed the matter, asked the Lord's guidance, and agreed the child's testimony is genuine to the best of our understanding, then GBC will gladly baptize any individual under fourteen with a credible profession of faith.