

# Baptism—When Should My Child Be Baptized?

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[0:00] Yeah, so this class is actually the second of what was intended to be like one after the other.! It's a brief series on baptism. So the first class is, and some of you have been to this one, when should I be baptized? That's the first one. And so that one's, you know, aimed at folks personally considering baptism for themselves.

This class, we're trying to explore that related question, when should my child be baptized? Which is the one we're all wrestling with, me included. So this class is really aimed at parents and trying to navigate this question at home.

I don't know about you, maybe it's a live topic in conversation at the house. Maybe you got kids who are asking a lot of questions, or maybe you've seen signs of spiritual interest in your kids, which is just overjoying whenever you see that. Maybe it's conversation that's come up at school, or maybe other peers have been baptized and has prompted the conversation.

Maybe it's the visuals of the church practicing baptism or communion, and they want to get into the conversation. So whatever the case, we're grateful for you taking the time to pray and to think about this topic along with us.

So I was just thinking, as I was putting this class together, to have a class like this is just a reminder of God's grace in the life of our church.

[1:19] Isn't it? That we'd be having a class to necessitate the conversation of kids growing up in the church and meaningfully wrestling with the question of if I'm a Christian.

So that means that there is a second generation for Trinity Grace Church being raised up to know and to fear the Lord. So that's stirring to me because it means that this church has a shot of outlasting us.

And that's just an incredible thought to think about. Kids are being taught to honor Christ, to live for his glory in Athens and beyond. So as parents, thank you. Thank you for thinking on these things and taking up that mantle and passing it on to the next generation.

And as parents, that's one of our primary duties in making disciples. We're called to make disciples. So we want to take seriously the focus of births and new births in our church.

So we're going to spend a few minutes talking and thinking about how we can engage in this season of discipleship with your kids. So I want to pray for us to that end and then we'll jump in.

Yes, Lord, we come to you now.

[2:27] Desiring wisdom. Come with thankful hearts. First and foremost, that we would even be having these conversations. So, Lord, I would pray for these kids that they would know you, that they would believe you, that they would trust in you with their whole lives and follow you.

And Lord, pray that you redeem them. That's our prayer. Lord, give us discernment as parents to know how to wisely, to walk through this, these conversations and to help them stir up their faith.

Lord, that's what we're asking for. So help us now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, I was going to spend quite a bit of time just unpacking believers' baptism.

We are credo-baptists as a church. That means that we baptize upon a credible profession of faith. But I really cover a lot of that in the previous class and talk through some of that position as opposed, in contrast to infant baptism, why we're not pedo-baptists.

There's a whole spectrum of infant baptists, and that's another conversation. So we're starting with the assumption of our church doctrine, where we land, that we're baptizing people upon a credible profession of faith.

[3:44] Baptism is a response to what the Lord's already done in a person's heart, changed them, regenerated them. And so I'm going to kind of breeze through those first things.

If you want to talk more about that distinction, I'd be happy to talk with you after the class, and we can think about resources and things like that. But that's kind of the operating assumption that we're going to start from.

So I'm going to just offer up a few principles that relate to that to kind of prime us for the rest of the conversation, which is angled more towards when should my child be baptized?

So the first principle that's outlined there is the principle that belief comes before baptism. And I have a few texts on there, and there's different interpretations of these texts, and I'd be happy to dive into that later.

But it's our belief that baptism follows belief. And then there's this question of conversion. The Bible teaches that saving belief results in new life, regeneration, to be born again.

[4:45] That's Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John chapter 3, if you remember this conversation. Belief in the gospel causes us to be born again by the Spirit.

So Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that we are new creations. The old has passed away, the new has come. So with that being the case, then it's expected that a genuinely converted person of any age is going to start to bear fruit, to start to show evidence of new life.

New life in their thoughts. New life in their actions. New life in their desires. New life in their delights. The things they get excited about. So if belief comes before baptism, then we must test to see if there's saving belief that has resulted in new life.

Does that make sense? So that's kind of where we're trying to think. Faith is more than just believing Jesus is true or real. Faith, according to Scripture, is personally believing and placing our complete trust in Him.

I've used the analogy of working at Camp Living Stones. Some of the guys were just there. Didn't get a chance to see the tower. But if you've ever seen these climbing towers with zip lines that come off of it, that's what I want you to have in your mind.

[6:04] So I used to work the tower. And we'd put harnesses on kids. We'd hook them up to the zip line of the carabiner. And then I would be up there. And a lot of times you have to coach people off.

Because it's way different being on the ground than it is being up there and actually stepping off the cliff, the precipice, and putting your full weight and trust into that harness and that carabiner.

And that zip line is going to take you where it wants you to go. Now, it's often the case that you get up there and people start to actually wrestle with, should I be up here?

Or I've had to talk through many people and some come to a stalemate and decide, hey, I'm getting off this thing. I'm going back down. I'm going back down the tower. But the idea that I think relates well with this idea of trust and faith is that in a similar way, we're not just believing that the harness exists.

We're not just believing that Jesus exists. We're putting the full weight of our lives under his command. And he's taking us where he wants us to go. So I want that image to just be in your mind as we move along.

[7:11] And it will come to play in this conversation about discerning that with children. OK, so harnessing the zip line, faith is personally believing and placing our complete trust in him.

So the principle here ultimately is that true conversion leads to evidence of new life. It's obvious that someone is dangling from the line and zipping out across a chasm.

OK, so that's that's kind of the second principle that I want to mention in getting started. The next header is the meaning and purpose of baptism. Again, this is largely covered in the previous class. All that content, that audio is uploaded there. And so you can listen to that there and get a feel for how I break out Romans 6. But here the principle is this baptism.

We believe is an outward expression of an inward reality of being united by faith to Christ and his people. OK, so baptism is an outward expression.

[8:10] It's not affecting salvation, but it is an expression of salvation. And God gives grace and encouragement is an outward expression

of an inward reality of being united by faith to Christ and his people.

OK, so there's a few principles, just assumptions that I want to have in place before we continue on so we can talk more specifically about children. So with these principles in place, we can say that Trinity Grace holds to what's called believers baptism.

So baptism, in other words, is only appropriate for those who have responded to the good news of the gospel by trusting in Jesus Christ. OK, so with those kind of pillars in place, that might sound really simple.

It's like, OK, well, let's do this then. You may even wonder why we would have an entire second class to address parents if the scriptural principles are the same for children and for adults.

It's not that those things are different. So upon reading scripture, even, I mean, we see professions of faith closely tied to baptisms. That's what we see in Acts. There's a couple of them listed in here from Acts 2.

[9:18] Many professed Christ and then subsequently 3000 were baptized. 3000 souls were baptized and added to their number, it says. The Ethiopian in Acts chapter 8, he professed Christ and it was like immediately he's like, here's some water.

Let's do this. And so Philip goes and ushers him into the water. He was baptized. So we have these we these narratives in our mind. It could be argued that, yeah, it's biblical.

You can make this argument that is biblical to baptize upon profession of faith. So when it comes to our children, it may seem, well, they if they profess, then they should be baptized right away.

That's what some of the evidence that we see in the New Testament. However, we would caution against owning that view too quickly without some further thought, especially when it comes to baptizing children.

So what I want to do just for a moment is to consider a contrast of context in the New Testament narratives where we see a lot of these professions of faith baptism shortly after.

[10:22] So for the New Testament context, I'm going to distinguish it from our context in the New Testament context, all baptisms in the New Testament were adults in pioneering context with high costs.

OK, it's really important because what we're considering is this a principle that we should apply right here, right now and with our children. So let me break it out a little bit. When I say adults, our Presbyterian friends, they like to highlight accounts of whole households being baptized.

Like Cornelius in Acts 10, Lydia in Acts 16, the Philippian jailer in Acts 18. But we would caution and press pause here because household does not necessarily mean infants.

That can be read into that text. It might not even mean children for that matter, because it's often the case that older children, servants, even adult children with their own families would live together in the same household.

So we can't just assume that household could simply be others who also believed in Christ and then were baptized after that. So add to that, the people of these households are depicted as gathering, hearing the word.

[11:39] Even in the Philippian jailer situation, they heard the word, the household did, and then they went away rejoicing. They rejoiced at hearing the word. That indicates to me that these weren't infants, but people who are old enough to understand and believe and respond to the gospel.

All other explicit references to baptism in these narrative accounts are clearly adults. Okay, so I just want to lay some of that down. The adults being a category here for the New Testament context.

Another is that this is pioneering context. There were no established churches yet. That's what Acts is, is establishing churches. Right? So there are no pastors and elders entrusted with the ongoing care and protection of Christ's people at that point.

Throughout the New Testament letters, as the church becomes established in different locations, we see the important structures of pastoral leadership, church discipline. Those things are instituted to guard their local churches from false teachers, to guard from dangerous doctrine, to guard from sin, to guard from unrepentance.

That's where we see this New Testament letters being fleshed out. So in other words, all the baptisms in the narrative sections are not necessarily normative patterns to follow in the church

today.

[12:58] Okay, so that's another category, pioneering context. And a third is the high costs aspect of this. Judaism, keep in mind, at this time was a minority religion in the Roman world.

And as Christianity came onto the scene, it was seen as a despised minority within the minority. Does that make sense? So in other words, those who converted and expressed allegiance to Jesus Christ, they were abandoning not only the majority culture, but their status as a minority within the minority.

They're abandoning both of those, the majority and the minority. So to be a Christian in this context was to be dismissed, to be despised by every rank of society.

There was a cost, in other words. There was a high cost to associate yourself with Jesus and his followers. It meant forsaking family. It meant forsaking jobs, social status, opportunities for marriage and friendship.

And what do you get in exchange for those things, for trading those things in? Ridicule, opposition, and suffering. That was the trade in this context. So in other words, there were not ulterior motives drawing people in to follow Jesus in this context.

[14:19] I want to contrast that with our context a little bit. Okay, so in our context, instead of discussing baptism of adults in pioneering contexts with high costs, we're considering children in an established church and a Christian culture.

Okay, so there's a difference here. You're going to look at these in reverse order. So think about Christian culture. I don't mean all of Athens is Christian. That's not what I'm trying to say. But think of it in this way.

In contrast with the high stakes context of the early church, our kids, by God's grace, are growing up in a relatively pro-Christian environment. Not only culturally, but think about this.

We live in an area of the rural South still reaping the benefits of Christian revivals. We reap the benefits of the establishment of Christian institutions, the permeation of a Christian worldview. Even on the schools down the road, it says, in God we trust real big on the side of the school. Like those are things that are inherited because of this heritage of being enveloped in a Christian worldview for many years, many decades.

[15:25] Also, many of our children within this context enjoy the benefits of attending school and going to church with other like-minded believers who are eager to engage in a community centered on Christ.

I'm celebrating. I'm not poo-pooing that. So don't hear that. I'm just contrasting that with what we see at the high stakes costs in the New Testament. All of these things are a gift from God.

This is a wonderful privilege, but it can also, it can muddy the waters of motivation when it comes to the question of baptism.

Because the pressures and suffering that are often there to reveal authentic faith are not as explicitly present in our kids' lives growing up in this context.

Particularly at a young age in the care of a Christian home. So those factors can make it more difficult to discern the motivations behind a profession of faith.

[16:23] So we have to recognize the temptation our kids face to please parents, to please teachers, to fit in, to be with their friends, to be like the other church members that they know and love and respect.

There's a temptation for our kids to fit in and to be accepted. All right. So that's a category that we need to recognize. And then another one is that we're in an established church instead of a pioneer context.

So in contrast with the pioneer context, the church was eventually organized. That's what we see in the rest of the New Testament. In fact, many of the baptisms that we see in the New Testament become the charter members of the ongoing churches in those same communities.

Think about Lydia and the Philippian jailer. They go on to become the core of the Philippian church. Or the assumed makeup of the church includes those united to Christ through faith.

So these communities of believers begin to regularly assemble in a place. And then additionally, pastors are identified and installed in these churches. If you remember, Paul charges Titus at the very beginning of the letter to Titus, put what remained in order, in order and appoint elders in every

town.

[17:40] Indicating the evangelism and the gathering of Christ's universal body was not the end goal. There was more to be done. There was an organized and institutionalizing of the church for its good, its protection, for its leadership.

So, you know, you see Paul saying, pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock. Talking to the pastors, pay attention to yourselves and all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for not your church, but the church of God being entrusted to you, which he obtained with his own blood.

So, as such, baptism is the entry point into the life of the local church and membership within a church. So pastors and the church more broadly are called to be set apart from the world to live as a redeemed community.

Therefore, we believe that only believers should be welcomed into the community of faith and the members should be willing and ready to bear the burdens and privileges of local church life, including things like giving, serving, church discipline.

Think of those categories, what it means to be incorporated into membership within a local church. So the responsibility of discerning genuine conversion and the readiness to engage in church membership present additional cautions for baptism for younger children.

[19:12] So would your child be ready to understand and more importantly, live out their faith in the context of the local church, according to our membership agreement, for instance?

We go through that together. I actually have some copies over here if you want a refresher and like to look at it. So that's an established church. The last part, in contrast with the New Testament patterns we see, is that we're talking about children.

And like I said, there are no explicit examples of children being baptized in the New Testament. This doesn't mean that children or teenagers were not baptized.

It doesn't mean that either. Well, we simply just don't have an account or specific instruction from the Bible about the timing of baptizing children growing up in an established church.

So the limited information we have indicates that we should exercise caution in this area as we prayerfully walk forward together. And so I want to appeal for the need for humility and discernment.

[20:13] That's our next category here. So we've established some of these pillars. Belief comes before baptism. True conversion leads to evidence of new life. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality of being united by faith to Christ and his people.

Information about baptism in the New Testament is limited to adults in a hostile pioneering context. Okay, so even though the context of the New Testament does not outline specific instructions for navigating the baptism of children in the established church, which is what our context is, there are, take heart, there are a few more clear principles that can help us.

So what is clear for parents during this season? Parents are entrusted with the task of discipling your children by bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

That's what it says in Ephesians 6. But that's not all that's included. Another category is the church as a principal actor in this conversation.

The church is entrusted with the sacrament of baptism, which is the entry point into the life and membership of the church. And in particular, pastors are entrusted with overseeing, protecting and caring for Christ's church.

[21:33] So you really have these three components that are trying to work together in the conversation about when should the child be baptized? So both parents and church leadership, we've got to walk together forward in humility, depending on the Lord.

As we navigate our responsibilities that God's assigned to us in discerning a child's profession of faith. So we all know some churches are willing to baptize any child that makes a profession of faith, regardless of their age.

And then on the other end, other churches set a threshold. There's churches we know that they say 18 years old. We're not going to entertain the conversation until you're 18. And they won't baptize any children prior to that birthday.

At Trinity Grace, we don't see explicit warrant for setting a minimum age for baptism. We don't see that. We believe every genuine Christian should be baptized following conversion. We believe that childhood conversion is possible and even probable. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. And we're we're eager to support parents as as we all wrestle through this and try to proclaim the gospel to our children.

[22:41] We're calling them to faith and repentance. And so, yes, we desire to see as many children as possible converted at a young age. And at the same time, we also don't think that baptism immediately following a child of profession of faith is necessarily the wisest next step.

So in the first class, the question of baptism is downstream from belief and conversion. Right. Baptism, belief and conversion is actually upstream.

And we're trying to discern, is this child a Christian? Is this child a Christian? Have they been converted by the saving grace of God? So navigating that question is the thing that presents a unique set of challenges with children.

And here's why. Now, we're going to take a few moments to consider children and conversions. The next header. So the first thing is to say again. It's likely that children will convert in childhood, which is wonderful.

We believe children can and do become genuine, come to genuine saving faith in Christ. I mean, just think about the book of Proverbs, for instance. The whole book is a training manual for a child from his father to know how to follow the Lord wisely.

[23:52] So there's many passages that call for older believers to faithfully teach younger believers to know and to follow the Lord. So secondly, we were just we rejoice in the phenomenon of the Lord's saving young children of believers like ourselves while still living at home.

There are many testimonies of adults and many in this room probably coming to saving faith at younger ages. That's good news. And we should continue to pray for our kids that he continued the same work in our homes.

We also want to outline some of the difficulties, though. So there are some challenges of discerning genuine conversion in children. So our confidence in the possibility of childhood conversion doesn't necessarily mean it's easy to tell when childhood conversion has taken place.

What makes assessing a child's faith more difficult? I have a book called Your Child's Profession of Faith by a pastor named Dennis Gunderson. I have a few copies of that over here. I'd be happy to hand those out afterwards.

But he gives three categories that characterize the season of childhood that make it more difficult to discern the motivations and the fruit that they're bearing. And so here are some of the categories he outlines.

[25:07] The first that we see in Scripture over and over again is the intellectual immaturity. The judgment and discernment of children is less developed and less mature than in most adults.

That doesn't take much convincing you guys have kids. You know that's true. In fact, this characteristic of children is consistently used in Scripture to exemplify immature thinking. He uses children to demonstrate what does immaturity and thinking look like. Here it is. Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. So you can see some examples of how that's used. So that is a category is intellectual immaturity. Secondly is instability. Another characteristic that we see in Scripture, Scripture holds this up as a quality to clarify the idea of what we are to grow out of as believers.

Instability, changeableness. Even as a teenager, I remember like asking my mom. Hey, I wasn't asking her initially. I was trying to get dreadlocks. I was making dreadlocks. Probably what happened to my hair. I was just grinding sand into it.

[26:14] And she just said, you aren't thinking about what this is going to do long term. You're not thinking about what it communicates. You're not thinking about all these like getting a job. You're not thinking about any of these things.

I was like, you're right. I'm not. I had a tattoo sleeve that I wanted to get on my arm. I had it all mapped out. And I was like, I'm just a few years down the road in my 20s.

And then I'm like, man, I'm so glad I didn't get that tattoo sleeve. Like I thought I was having some dragons wrapping around, coming down my chest and stuff. I was like, OK, that probably was not a great option.

And that was as a teenager. Think about, I mean, even younger, your kids, they're changing all the time. Their preferences, their thoughts, what captivates them, what they're interested in. Instability. A third category is persuadability.

The season of childhood is generally characterized by persuadability. And it's assumed that children are generally naive and are in their need of instruction. That's why we're in their lives.

[27:10] They need wisdom. They need prudence. They need knowledge. They need discretion. They need help. But they can also be more easily swayed and deceived for good or for ill.

So those are three categories of just children that are different than adults considering these same things. So that makes it more difficult. But I would add a fourth category. And this actually came from our friend Steve Whitaker drawing this out.

And I think it's right. Parental yearning is a category that's in here as well. Of all the influences, parents are the most eager.

Naturally, we desire our kids to come to faith in Christ. We desire them to come alive spiritually, to repent, to believe, to grow in the gospel. And we love them so much we can't even imagine the thought of them being separated from God forever.

That's a terrifying, horrifying thought. We want to throw our bodies in front of that at all costs. So we may be eager for them to confess faith, to pray, to show evidence of God's grace.

[28:15] And this yearning can lead us, though, to be prematurely. View things like that prematurely as definitive proof of conversion. And so we've got to guard our own hearts against indulging in a kind of false confidence on your child's behalf.

So that's a category that we need to have as we navigate this. Another category here is the danger of false assurance. Just suppose that a 23-year-old came up to you with a desire to be baptized.

What would you want to know in that conversation with that 23-year-old? What if it was a 13-year-old that came up to you and asked, what if it was a 6-year-old?

Or what if it was a 3-year-old that said, I love Jesus and saying, Jesus loves me? Would anything give you pause before baptizing that child upon a profession or that teenager or that adult?

Is profession of faith alone sufficient category to go ahead and baptize someone? I dare to say that many of us have been in church cultures where you could be baptized and become a member if you signed a card after an altar call, like I did in many churches growing up.

[29:29] Or maybe raise your hand at VBS and be baptized, which I also did. So in a desire to be charitable, a lot of weight can be placed on a profession of faith.

And I think it's from a posture of desire and goodwill. But as a result, a child may quickly be baptized without an adequate grasp of the gospel or regenerating faith.

That's really the pivotal question. This has been the case in several large denominations prevalent in our area. In his book on baptism, author John Hammett said this in the quotes, I think, on your paper.

I've personally seen young children make a profession, receive baptism, later leave the faith, live lives that give no evidence of regeneration, and yet maintain confidence that they are in right standing with God because they were baptized church members.

I've seen others who have come back to God after a period of wandering and have wrestled with the need to receive believers baptism. They have professed faith sincerely as children.

[30:30] But looking back, they conclude that they were sincerely repeating the answers that they've been taught. They wanted to please the parents and sincerely seeking to please the authority figures in their lives. But they had no genuine faith.

I don't know about you that that's actually my story. I'm one of those statistics in there that wandered and came what I thought was back, but I think was actually converted for the first time later on in my life.

So the breadth of that problem is really seen in the phenomenon known as re-baptisms. And there are several even in our church that have been baptized. According to data, early 90s, one large denomination found that many adults previously baptized as children were later baptized again as adults.

And they concluded that what they received as children was not actually believers baptism. So the study found that there were nearly 40 percent of those being re-baptized as adults that were baptized as children in a credo Baptist context.

So even though it seems like a charitable posture, I mean, the devastating effects of baptizing on the basis of an earnest profession as a young child has yielded a lot of false assurance, a lot of confusion, a lot of pain in the church.

[31:49] And if the child is actually unconverted, then they will be falsely assured that salvation for salvation and unprepared for judgment. And it hinders the church's mission in proclaiming Christ as a group.

So some parents struggle with the thought of delaying baptism for fear of hindering their children's obedience or maybe snuffing out their faith. But our friend Steve Whitaker, he shared, I think, what's wise insight with this impulse.

He said, in many cases, there's safety and patience. Wise parents and pastors will wrestle with the recognition that the dangers of providing a child with false assurance through premature baptism is far higher than the risk of discouraging a child's faith through delayed baptism.

A truly converted child who is not baptized right away is in no danger of losing his or her salvation. We have never seen a child's faith harmed by delaying baptism.

On the other hand, every pastor has a collection of heartbreaking stories of young people who were baptized too young, young people whose premature confidence bred complacency towards godliness, sadly culminating and turning away from the faith they never really held.

[32:59] It's a sobering thought.

In the younger years, children imitate their parents. You can see your idiosyncrasies start to come up in your kids. It's wild. Their mannerisms, the things that they are interested in.

Kids are like little sponges and they're naturally going to copy what they see and they really want to please their parents early on. That pleasing of parents does not last forever, does it, Mandy?

It doesn't last forever. They start to pull away. They start to want to be their own person. But in those early days, it's easy for a child to pick up on the outside behaviors.

Things like how we talk, what we do, even physical actions like putting our hands up in songs. I have this cute picture of Arlo in Louisville and he's an infant holding his hands up at Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville.

[34:17] It's amazing. But it's not necessarily meaning that there's an inside change. So that's another reason why it's difficult to discern. But as your children grow older, they become more personally independent.

They become more socially aware. And they're increasingly individuating is what the word is. So that's they're becoming more independent and they're thinking they are having to make decisions based on their own set of convictions, not your convictions anymore.

Their social environment expands. And with it, the temptations to fear man like the class they're doing down there, their temptations to people, please their temptations to simply pursue power or pleasure.

So those temptations become clearer. But so do the victories that come through dependence on the spirit if they've been genuinely converted.

You see what I'm saying? So those things can crop up, but actually gives them more context for the evidence of their genuine faith to be revealed, which is wonderful.

[35:22] But that's a category that they're shifting from right now. So it makes it hard to discern. So how can we encourage our children? If you think back to the to the illustration of the zip line and the harness as a parent, you are taking your child up the tower right now.

That's what we're doing. We're taking them up. We're explaining the parts of the harness. We're explaining the strength of the line. We're explaining the experience of trust. We're demonstrating these things personally, what it looks like for mom, for dad to step out and put our faith and trust in the harness, as it were.

We're living it out before them over and over and over. And early on, they are trying to understand and imitate you up in the up in the tower, the tower of faith.

They may even have the harness and show signs of suiting up. It may look like, yeah, they're moving towards this. They're starting to actually put it on.

They're actually suiting up. But but but the sure signs will come. They'll become increasingly evident as the child steps off the platform for themselves and they begin to zip.

[36:39] So in the midst of fear, in the midst of suffering, he or she chooses to put his full weight and trust in Jesus Christ.

And as that child moves further along on this journey of trust, dependence, it becomes clearer and clearer to all of us where his trust is placed and what sustains that child.

It's hard to tell when they're still standing in the tower. And we don't know if this is mom and dad that they're trying to imitate or if they have indeed placed their whole heart, their trust in walking in faith and repentance.

So the goal for your child right now is not ultimately baptism. That's so important. The goal right now is it's not ultimately baptism, but trusting Christ.

That's the biggest goal for your child at all points of their life, not just up until baptism, at all points of their life. That's the desire which will give way to evidence, clearer evidence over time.

[37:46] It will. It will accumulate. So these are evidence of faith that you can look for as a parent. Are they stepping out? Are they leaning? You want to encourage him.

You can do this, son. You can trust the Lord. You can keep pursuing him. As they mature in Christ, it's going to become more evident that they've been converted.

So we want to look for ongoing patterns of fruitfulness to encourage them. Look for a sound profession of belief in the gospel. Does your child understand the story of the gospel?

Do they understand it? Has your child responded to the gospel in repentance and faith?

Affectionate love for Christ. Does your child show an evident love for Jesus Christ?

Do they delight in the Lord? Does your child genuinely try out of love for God to apply what he has been taught from God's word in his life? Do you see a determination to obey Jesus no matter what?

[39:01] Do they show an interest, a strong interest in pleasing God by willing obedience at least to what they know and understand? Does the child have a heart to obey parents, other authorities, God's place over his or her life?

When they're corrected or instructed according to truth, is that welcomed or is there resistance and arrogance? Do they respond in a humble, receptive way?

Do they confess sin even if they haven't been caught? That's a that's a helpful category. Do they volunteer it to you, to the Lord? Are they repentant?

And what are their friends like? That's a good category. What is their relationship like with classmates, with siblings, teachers, parents? Do they honor Christ in these relationships, too?

Out of eyeshot of mom and dad. Another category is trusting Christ in suffering and trials. Has your child responded to different tests of faith?

[40:03] Like when they're playing sports with people who don't follow Jesus or when family members or friends sin against him? How has your child responded to suffering? Like a serious sickness, for instance, or the loss of a close family member or some other major difficulty?

So here here are three ways to help build your child's faith. The first we say is just keep encouraging your child.

Praise your child for any evidence of God's grace you see for doing anything they would not naturally want to do in order to serve and share with others and honor the Lord. We want to encourage that.

Look for the fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Look for moments of them trusting the Lord and sorrows and trials that they're experiencing or suffering that they're experiencing.

Look for unsolicited confession, conviction and desire to please the Lord. Those are things you can right now encourage him. Yeah, keep keep following him. Keep trusting the Lord.

[41:08] This is wonderful. Encourage you to challenge your child. Urge your child to value knowing God and walking in relationship with God above all. Help them to understand some of the costs of following Jesus Christ.

Like in the New Testament, there's costs. Forgiving those who sin against you. Can you demonstrate that in your own life and help them understand that that cost? Loving their enemies. Are there opportunities to teach them these things?

Battling sin and temptation by the power of the spirit. Receiving discipline from the Lord. Learning contentment in every situation. These are things we can teach them and encourage them with right now.

Challenge them. The third thing is to fix your child's eyes on Christ, not his profession. Fix their eyes on Christ, not his profession.

Keep your child from being distracted with worries about what other Christians think of his profession. It's fear of man that motivates that and fear even of parents. It could be a temptation to become preoccupied with anguish over his standing in the church and whether he's baptized or not.

[42:16] Do everything you can to keep your child from being focused on the baptism as the end goal. Baptism is not tied to their salvation. Instead, encourage your child to keep the focus on knowing Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

That's the goal. So during the season, we want to help our children not only understand the gospel, but put their trust in the gospel. Baptism is this wonderful public profession of faith.

But prior to going public, we want to help them to be transformed and rooted in the gospel and begin bearing fruit and encourage them in faith and obedience. These are all inward changes and it's cultivation of an obedient heart.

And if baptism comes up in conversation, which it does, it does at my house. We're trying to help them to keep following Christ, to keep submitting to him, keep obeying him.

We have to lead in these conversations because sometimes it can be the dominant theme. It's like, I'm not baptized. I'm inefficient. I'm not good enough or not Christian enough somehow.

[43:18] That's not what we're we need to redirect them because that's not what we're saying. And that's not true at all. Well, we're what we're aiming for. Buddy, you are following the Lord and we want to keep you growing and keep on developing.

Keep trusting the line. Keep stepping out. Keep forgiving your enemies. We want to keep growing in these things. And it will come. It will come in time. If the Lord opens up the heart, he's going to provide the opportunity where it's going to be evident.

We we need to go public with this. So those are inward changes that we're trying to help cultivate. So be careful not to let the fear of disappointing your child dictate the trajectory of the conversation. We want to redirect them to trust the Lord, his timing and to keep growing. A big a big piece of this is heart driven, Holy Spirit supported faith and obedience.

So parents and pastors, we can feel more confident about a child's faith when we see a growing desire for an actual obedience that comes from the child's heart.

[44:19] When we get to the time for baptism, it's going to be like, heck, yeah, of course we're going to baptize them. Look at all the evidence of faith, all the things that they've been through. It's just like a portfolio of evidence.

It's it's wonderful. We want to stand behind that as a community and welcome them in baptism. So here are some next steps. Here's some next steps. We'd encourage you as a parent to allow for your child to grow mature under your guidance and instruction.

And as a season of patient cultivation, use those three ways that we've already suggested to build out your child's faith. And we'd recommend waiting to have a conversation about baptism until your child is closer to 12.

Again, that's not a hard set rule. But by this time, developmentally, you guys know you've been 12. It's it's a time when we start moving away from imitation towards individuation and owning convictions and acting independently.

They'll they'll likely have more substantial opportunities to be tested in the faith at that point and beyond. It can come before. Certainly it can come before. But it certainly does come more explicitly as you go on.

[45:29] Ask your child. Questions that give opportunity for heart conversations. You can start these things now. These are some wonderful questions I think can get at motivations and interests and desires.

Are there shifts that are happening? What's what's animating their their desires for these things? Spend time collecting evidence of your child's profession of faith. We do this.

We have, you know, note on a phone. We have journal things. We're just kind of observing right now. Like what? What are we seeing in their lives? What's happening? You can you can do this. You're looking for evidence of spiritual fruit or conviction under fire.

Those are categories that are really helpful to be able to say, buddy, I saw you do this. It's so encouraging. And if you've heard your child articulate a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ, you've seen many evidences of faith personally.

Invite other people into that conversation. What other what other people are in their lives? Other other teachers and classmates and coaches. Have they seen similar evidence?

[46:37] So you're building that portfolio of encouragement. Another category would be studying about baptism together.

You could walk through these texts. You could go through Wayne Grudem's really helpful introductory chapter on baptism. I can get you a copy of that if you're interested. Another thing would be helping your child articulate a clear profession of faith.

They're going to be sharing the story of salvation for the rest of their lives, for the glory of God. Help them start to articulate that. I was lost. I went astray. My heart wanted other things.

I was unkind. I would you know, there's all sorts of categories that animate the sin of your kid's heart. How did Jesus start to change that? What has he done? How did he do that? Help them to be able to articulate that.

Consider having them write their testimony out and then talk through it. And then, of course, at the at the end, this is what we would suggest is that we encourage you and your child to connect with us.

[47:40] Explore the possibility of being baptized. There's a there's a baptism request form online. You can jump in there. We can set up a time to be able to connect and talk some more. So let me let me pray for us.

And then I will stick around and we can talk more if you have more questions. Oh, Lord, thank you for your kindness towards us. Thank you that we have a class like this. And we want to entrust the gospel to the next generation.

I pray you. I pray you save the children represented in this room and that they walk with you all the days of their lives. That's what we're asking for. Help us now in discerning the timing and helping disciple our kids.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.