



LEADING YOUR CHILD TO CHRIST

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEXT GENERATION TEAM
INGLESIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

It is an exciting privilege to be part of your own child's spiritual journey. In fact, it's a biblical pattern. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul says to Timothy, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." The faith was passed down from one generation to the next, within the family. This document is meant to help you with that process. It is intended to help you talk to your child about belief in Jesus and baptism.

First, we need to be clear on what we are talking about. Salvation refers to the change from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive in Christ, from not being a follower of Jesus to being a follower of Jesus. The Bible discusses this change in a number of ways. It says that we have been "made alive" (Ephesians 2:5), "saved" (Ephesians 2:8), "transferred to the kingdom" of Jesus (Colossians 1:13), adopted into God's family (Ephesians 1:5), and "reconciled to God" (Romans 5:10); we have put off "the old self" and have "put on the new" (Colossians 3:9-10).

We were spiritually dead and walking (consistently living) in sin. Now we are re-created, made new, and walking in good works. And the difference is due to the work of Christ. We have been united to him, the one who lived a perfect life, died in the place of sinners, and came back to life. That is at the heart of salvation.

SALVATION

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

In order to be saved, we need to understand the facts of the gospel. Here are the basic facts and some Scriptures that teach them:

- **We are sinners.** Sin is anything that is contrary to God's character. We are born with sinful desires, and we eventually do sinful things. We disobey God (Psalms 51:1-3; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-3).
- **Because of our sin, we deserve God's wrath.** We have sinned against a holy God, and the offense is so great that we deserve to be punished forever (Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9).
- **God loves us and sent his son for us.** Even though we have sinned against him and worshiped other things, God still loves us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- **Jesus died in the place of sinners.** Jesus lived a perfect life. When he died on the cross, then, he was not dying for his own sins, but for the sins of others. For all who believe in him, Jesus has already died in their place and their sin has been paid for (Isaiah 53:4-6; Mark 10:45).
- **Jesus came back to life.** Having become a substitute for us and having offered an invaluable sacrifice for our sins, Jesus was raised from the dead. In his resurrection, Jesus defeated our enemy, overcame death, and made eternal life possible (Matthew 28; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28; Hebrews 2:14-15).

OUR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

The Bible is clear that we cannot earn our salvation or work for it. We do not deserve it and cannot repay God for it. It is his gift to us. If anyone is saved, it is because of the grace of a sovereign God. The Bible is equally clear, however, that in order to be saved, God's grace requires a response from us. Specifically, we are to trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Perhaps the most helpful and clearest way to talk about our response to the gospel is to use two biblical words: "repent" and "believe."

- **Repent:** To repent is to have a change of heart and mind. It involves a willful turning away from sin. Of course, that does not mean we will be perfect from that point on. It does mean, though, that we recognize sin for what it is – an incredible offense against a holy God – and we decide that we no longer want to walk in that.

- **Believe:** As we turn away from sin, we turn to Jesus. This is belief. We believe that Jesus is Lord, died for us, and was raised from the dead. Because of that, we commit to following him for the rest of our lives.

There are other common ways to talk about our response to the gospel, such as:

- Ask Jesus into your heart
- Make a decision for Christ
- Give your life to the Lord

While not wrong, these phrases may be less clear to a child or teenager, and therefore less helpful.

When you are confident that your child understands and believes the gospel and wants to trust Jesus, lead them to pray. Encourage them to acknowledge to God that they are a sinner, tell Him what they believe about Jesus, and ask Him to forgive their sin.

WHY BAPTISM?

When you talk to your child about salvation, you will also need to be prepared to talk to them about baptism. In the Bible, the two are closely connected. They are not the same, but they go together. In fact, according to the Bible, baptism is an expression of faith in response to the gospel.

Colossians 2:12 says, "having been buried with [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead." This verse reminds us that a right understanding of baptism is grounded in the gospel itself, that is, the death and resurrection of Jesus. Those in Christ have been buried with him and raised with him.

So how do his death and resurrection come to benefit us? This verse tells us that through faith we are united to Christ in his death and resurrection. If he has died and been buried, and we are united to him, then what has happened to us? We have died and been buried as well. The old self – the old "you" that was dead in your sin and an enemy of God – is dead. But we have also been united to Christ in his resurrection. We are raised to a new life. In fact, the change is so significant that we are said to be new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17). Baptism expresses this reality. It is a way of "saying" that you believe Jesus died for you and came back to life, and you're with him.

As you talk to your child about baptism, it may be helpful to explain this verse and then ask, "Is that what you are wanting to express? Is this what you believe?" When a person understands and believes the gospel, they should repent of their sin, call on the Lord to save them, and be baptized.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What has been the extent of spiritual conversations with your child?
2. Try to imagine how your child might answer the following questions based on your previous conversations.
 - a. *Who is God?*
 - b. *Who is Jesus?*
 - c. *What is sin?*
 - d. *How does God feel about sin?*
 - e. *How did God make the way to forgive us of our sin?*
3. Based on your answers to the previous question, how would you rate the child's readiness to repent and believe?
 - ___ *My child does not seem quite capable of understanding those concepts yet.*
 - ___ *There is some understanding, but they need more information or are not quite mature enough.*
 - ___ *My child knows the basics but has not yet expressed repentance and faith.*
 - ___ *My child knows the basics but is resistant to becoming a Christian at this point.*
 - ___ *My child has had a defining moment of repentance and faith.*
4. If your child has expressed genuine repentance and faith, can you pinpoint several areas of fruit in his or her life since that moment?
5. After working through the above questions, you should be able to accurately discern what next steps your child needs to take. Is it:
 - ___ *More time*
 - ___ *More information and conversation*
 - ___ *Prayer that God will communicate in ways you have not been able to in order to bring better understanding*
 - ___ *Gentle encouragement to repent and believe*
 - ___ *Move forward with believer's baptism*

TIPS AND POINTERS

- Be sure to pray for and with your child. Ask for the Holy Spirit to work in their heart and to give you wisdom of speech.
- Remember that simply knowing all the right answers does not mean they are born again; you need to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in the process.
- Do not push or set a goal for your child to be saved.
- Do not coerce your child into a decision or put words in their mouth.
- Let your child pray their own prayer of response rather than repeating after you. This helps you to grasp his understanding of repentance and faith.
- Steer away from yes or no questions when talking with your child. Seek to get them to provide longer answers.

MOVING FORWARD

When you sense that your child has become a Christ-follower and is ready for baptism, you will want to set up a time for your child to talk with an Ingleside pastor. In this conversation, the pastor will answer questions your child may have, ensure he has a proper understanding of the meaning of baptism, and encourage him in his walk with Christ. There are also membership classes for children and students which are required to become a member of Ingleside. They can attend this one-time class either before or after baptism. As you help your child move forward in this, be sure to provide resources for them to grow in the Lord like an age-appropriate Bible and other books that will help them to understand God's Word in deeper ways.