

Is My Child Ready For Immersion?

The question that all parents look forward to is the one where their child asks to be baptized. Many times this question is asked because there has been a lot of discussion about it, or a friend has just been baptized, or some other reason brings this to the forefront of a child's mind. No matter what, a parent sometimes doesn't think about what has spurred the child to think about such things because of the flood of joy that the child is even thinking about it period! However, even with the flood of joyful emotions, this process must not be rushed through.

Many times churches will go ahead with a baptism in hopes of not making the parents mad for believing their child isn't ready, or they will go ahead with it hoping that the child later in life will eventually resubmit to baptism when they get to a better point of understanding. It is with these two things in mind that I urge parents to take caution when dealing with the baptism of their child. Do I say "Do not baptize your child!" No, I don't, but you must make sure that the child has the proper level of spiritual understanding, or the child is simply getting wet, and nothing is taking place.

For example, a child is born in a state of innocence. They are pure, undefiled, and spotless of sin. They do not understand what sin is, nor do they comprehend the punishment that sin deserves (Eternal Hell). In fact Jesus states the following to the disciples and the crowd around Him: ". . . *'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.'*" (Matthew 18:3 NASB.) Jesus clearly states that we are to convert and become like the little children. Now if children were full of evil or if they were malicious and sinful I doubt Jesus would be telling us to mimic them.

With this said, because a child is in a sinless, innocent state we must understand and realize that baptism is pointless, and useless, because baptism is for the forgiveness of sin, and there is no sin to be forgiven in the innocent child. They are simply becoming wet and nothing is taking place! The Bible clearly states that there are several things that must take place, and be applicable for a child to be a candidate for and a recipient of a proper baptism. They are listed below:

1. A Child must understand what they are **Believing**:
 - a. The issue of Belief or Faith is more than just a basic belief in Jesus, there must be an understanding of **Who** Jesus is, and **Why** He went to the cross, **What** He did on the cross. **One should not expect a theological answer from a child** concerning these three W's mentioned above, but there must be a basic understanding in the mind of the child!
 - b. **Questions that should be asked**:
 - i. Who is Jesus?
 - ii. Why did He die on the cross?
 - c. **Scriptures to be studied**: - John 3:16, Hebrews 11:6, & Rom. 10:17
2. A Child must also understand **Repentance**:
 - a. Likewise there **MUST** be an understanding of what sin is. What it does to a person, and where it will ultimately send us as a result. A child must be able to understand the severity of sin.
 - b. **Questions that should be asked**:
 - i. Where would you go if you died right now? And why?
 1. A professor of mine introduced me to this question. This question can help you determine the state of mind the child is currently in,

and what you need to do next in many cases. Should a child respond “In my current state I’m going to heaven”, then they need to be instructed more. Which is not a bad thing! But time must be taken to instruct the child on what sin is (that it is bad) and what it does to our relationship with God. Other questions that should be asked are:

- ii. What is sin?
- iii. What does sin do to our relationship with God?
- iv. Where does sin send us?

c. **Scriptures to Be Studied** - Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Rom. 3:23, Rom. 6:23, 1 John 3:4.

- i. **NOTICE: I haven’t included scriptures on Immersion, I am automatically assuming the audience understands it is necessary for salvation. I’m simply focusing on the prerequisites that must be understood first.**

We must realize that Children are a special case, in that they “have such an innocent, trusting faith. They believe because they are told. It is when we mature, we become more skeptical. If a child understands who Christ is, what He has done, if they understand right from wrong, express regret for past sins, and have a heart that wants to do right. They are more than likely ready to become Christians.”¹

As a minister and also as one who has personally dealt with this in my own life I also caution the speedy baptism of a child. As mentioned above, should a child be too young and not ready they will only be getting wet. And as a result when they grow older they will endure turmoil over whether their baptism was valid and whether or not they, in their current state, will go to heaven or hell. I say this because I was baptized at 11, as I grew older and reached the age of 17 I looked back and couldn’t remember what my state of mind was. I was placed into extreme turmoil of sleepless nights worrying whether or not I would make it to heaven.

It was a **HORRIBLE** experience, one which words cannot express, nevertheless this was my experience (not every child will go through this, but I want to prevent this from happening to others if possible). With this in mind, whether we are parents or spiritual mentors we must make sure that the children under our care understand what they are doing. Or else we are simply setting them up to go through some extreme soul searching later in life. A child should never, I repeat **NEVER** be baptized simply to “lock” or to “keep” them in church, with hopes that when they get older they will come to a better understanding and resubmit themselves to Biblical Baptism. I encourage all parents to take the time to educate their child concerning biblical truths, making sure that they understand them so that when the time comes they are in a proper state of mind to receive a Biblical and Valid baptism.

Sincerely, Joshua Hicks
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P.S. Keep in mind a Child should not be expected to know everything, being a Christian is a growing process from the point of Immersion to the day they die. More knowledge will come in time, and through study. Right now they just need the “ABC’s” or the Basics of the faith.

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