

# Pathway to Baptism for Children

## Introduction

Crosspoint Elders expect with confidence that God will awaken a believing faith in the hearts of our children as parents faithfully raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord consistently calling children to repent of sin and believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. In order to assist parents as the primary disciple-makers of their children, the Elders have created the following “Pathway to Baptism” for children. These guidelines and tools are designed to assist parents in discerning the readiness of a child for baptism.

## Why is such a pathway needed?

With the continuous growth within our membership of families and the increasing fulfillment by parents of their God-given responsibilities to be the primary disciple-makers within the home, Crosspoint parents have expressed interest in baptism of children who have repented of sin and turned to Christ in faith as Lord and Savior. Previously, there has been no clear pathway or communication to parents as to the appropriate age or evidence of repentance needed for Elders to affirm baptism of believing children. Additionally, it is sometimes difficult to discern a credible profession of faith in the life of a child who is under the authority of believing parents. The Elders are convinced that the haphazard administration of believer’s baptism to young children has been one of the greatest challenges to Baptist churches in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, causing more confusion and spiritual damage than the practice of paedobaptism among the reformed tradition. However, the fact remained: without a clear pathway to baptism for children, parents were left feeling inadequate in shepherding children who are professing faith and they are left with several questions including:

1. At what age do the Elders affirm the baptism of a child?
2. What does the Bible state is the appropriate age for baptism of a child?
3. Why does a child need to wait for baptism when the examples of Scripture are of those repenting and believing being immediately baptized?
4. What evidences of repentance and faith are required for baptism of a child?
5. What steps do parents and the believing child need to take for baptism at Crosspoint Church?
6. What should a parent do when a child is not ready for baptism but professes repentance and belief?

We are a church passionate about proclaiming the gospel, and this passion should rightfully be modeled and seen first in the families of our membership. As such, we should expect and long for with great confidence that God will indeed call unto Himself children at a young age to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. When children, entrusted to us by the

Lord, repent and believe, it is necessary that we provide a clear pathway to baptism as a means of equipping parents for shepherding their children well and as an encouragement and affirmation to children of God's work in their lives in calling them to Himself.

### **How do I know if my child is ready for baptism?**

Following the pattern for baptism in the New Testament, baptism should occur immediately after conversion when there is a credible profession of faith accompanied with discernable signs of regeneration. The fruit of a changed heart becomes evident over time, so the Elders recommend parents patiently continue to encourage, affirm, and talk with their child about what God is doing in their lives.

### **How can I discern if I should seek baptism for my child?**

Parents are often the most capable of discerning the work of the Lord in a child's heart. Parents are in daily contact with the child and have the ability to see fruit of regeneration blossom in a child. The Elders encourage parents to look for specific signs of regeneration.

1. *The Work of Holy Spirit:* The Lord awakens a believing faith in the heart of a child. The Holy Spirit through the faithful discipleship of parents, and other means of grace such as reading the Bible, participating in corporate worship, participating in family worship, and through the children's ministries of Crosspoint brings about conviction and awareness of sin (2 Kings 22; Romans 7:7-9). The following questions can help to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in a child's life:
  - a. *Does your child demonstrate sorrow and remorse about his sin or disobedience?*
  - b. *Does your child recognize he has sinned against God and not just against others?*
  - c. *Does your child confess his sins to God and ask for his mercy without your prompting?*
  - d. *Does your child demonstrate commitment to Christ in the face of temptation to disobey?*
  
2. *Hunger and Understanding of God's Word:* The Apostle Paul states that Scripture has the ability to make one "wise for salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). A parent can rightly expect to see from a child an interest in knowing and understanding the Word of God. The following questions can help discern a child's interest in the Word of God.
  - a. *Does your child pray and read the Scriptures on his own initiative?*
  - b. *Does your child desire to talk about the Scriptures and what they are reading?*
  - c. *Does your child demonstrate an understanding of the Scriptures when they are taught or is your child confused by the Scriptures?*
  
3. *Interest in Spiritual Things:* Most children have many interests as they mature intellectually and physically. The most meaningful of these interests capture and hold the attention of a child. Parents can expect that a child God has genuinely brought to

faith will have an interest in the things of God. The following questions can help discern a child's interest in the things of God.

- a. *Does your child talk with you about the things of God on their own initiative?*
- b. *Does your child express desire to participate in the ministries of the church?*
- c. *Does your child ask spiritual questions on his own initiative?*
- d. *Does your child ask to pray with you or you to pray for him?*
- e. *Does your child frame his life with a biblical worldview?*
- f. *Does your child demonstrate a genuine desire to tell others about Jesus?*

4. *Understanding of the Gospel:* When the Lord awakens a believing faith in a child he will demonstrate an understanding of the gospel and its effects on his life. While no one can expect a child to demonstrate a deep theological understanding of salvation, parents can expect to see a child begin to respond to their new life in Christ through an understanding of the gospel and how it effects their lives. The following questions can help discern if God has awakened a believing faith in a child.

- a. *Does your child understand that he is a sinner and cannot save himself?*
- b. *Does your child understand that his sins deserve eternal judgment?*
- c. *Does your child understand that Jesus died as a substitute for his sins?*
- d. *What evidence of repentance have you observed in your child?*
- e. *How does your child demonstrate his trust in Jesus?*
- f. *Is there a new pattern of the fruit of the Spirit in the child's life?*
- g. *Can your child explain how a person is saved?*

### **What age does Crosspoint baptize children?**

Crosspoint Church recommends that parents wait until a child is eight years of age before seeking baptism. This is a recommendation from the Elders and not a strict mandate. The Bible does not indicate a specific age at which a child should be baptized, so each child will be interviewed to determine readiness for baptism on a case-by-case basis.

### **Why do the Elders ask that we wait until age eight?**

There is nothing biblical or special about the age of eight, but over time it becomes clearer in discerning the faith of a child as he responds to his parents and the events of life. It is difficult to discern whether a child truly believes in Christ if he is obediently living under the authority of his parents. Once a child begins making choices and decisions apart from his parents, discernable evidence of salvation and trusting in Christ is clearer to his parents and the Elders. Parents are welcome to approach the Elders at any time to discuss the salvation and baptism of their child. The age of eight is a guide and each child will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## Pathway to Baptism Steps:

- 1. Parents Initiate with an Elder or Minister:** Parents who believe God has awakened a believing faith in their child in which he repents of his sin and believes in Jesus as his Lord and Savior, should initiate with an Elder or Minister a desire to begin the “Pathway to Baptism.”
- 2. Child Meets with Family Ministry Leader:** An Elder or Minister will assign a Family Ministry Leader to meet with the child for two to five sessions walking through the “Who will be King?” children’s brochure. The purpose of these sessions is for the Family Ministry Leader to discern if the child understands the gospel and has a credible testimony of regeneration. With a favorable recommendation to the Elders and approval by the Elders, the child will be scheduled for baptism.
- 3. Child Meets with an Elder or Minister Before Baptism:** Following the approval of the Elders, an Elder or Minister will meet with the child to rejoice with the child and discuss baptism. At this time a date will be determined for the child’s baptism and any other discipleship that needs to take place.
- 4. Child and Membership:** Children under the age of sixteen, who are baptized by immersion, upon the vote of the church body are welcomed into a “Fellowship Membership” status with Crosspoint Church. The “Fellowship Membership” assumes that a child with the help of his parents will seek a place to serve the church, continue to be discipled by his parents, and will faithfully participate in the ministries of the church. The “Fellowship Membership” does not allow a child to vote nor receive church discipline. Parents are encouraged to continue to exercise their God-given responsibilities by discipling their child.
- 5. Child and Covenant Membership:** Following the sixteenth birthday of a child, he may request of the Elders a membership interview to pursue Covenant Membership at Crosspoint Church. Any child who does not begin the Covenant Membership process will be removed from Fellowship Membership status upon graduation from high school.

## Can my child participate in communion before they are baptized?

The Elders do not encourage any person’s participation in the Lord’s Supper before baptism. Children who have not been baptized may be anxious to participate, but parents are reminded of Paul’s warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 for those who participate in the Lord’s Supper. Children may not be able to examine their faith, attitudes, and actions in light of this warning. The Elders encourage parents to disciple their children in understanding the significance of the Lord’s Supper and to make waiting positive for the child in the following ways:

1. *Instead of focusing on why your child should not participate in communion focus on your anticipation of having them participate in the Lord's Supper after baptism.*
2. *Use the quiet moments of passing the bread and juice to explain what each one represents and to remind your children of the gospel.*
3. *Speak to your children quietly about how you have seen the Lord at work in their lives.*
4. *Encourage your child to continue believing and trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord.*
5. *Talk with your children about using this time to confess and repent of sin, but help your child not to worry about faults but point them to Jesus death for our sins.*
6. *Talk with your children about the work that God has begun in their lives (Philippians 1:6).*
7. *Pray with your child during the Lord's Supper thanking Jesus for dying for your sins.*
8. *Bring your children close and let them see the bread and juice as you participate in the Lord Supper.*
9. *Remember to model participating in the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner with humility and reverence.*
10. *If any sin troubles you or exist in your life, do not participate in the Lord's Supper showing your children the seriousness. You may need to seek forgiveness from your children for impatience, anger, and laziness.*

**The Gospel and Waiting:** Crosspoint Church and its Elders rejoice in the work of God in saving the children entrusted to us. It is our longing that all of our children would come to faith in Christ and would actively participate in the purposes of God. We pray that God would grant that this generation of children entrusted to us would surpass previous generations in faith, in knowledge, in righteousness, in fruitfulness, in evangelistic zeal and in commitment to world evangelism.

We also recognize that sorrow over sin and an interest in spiritual things alone is not sufficient evidence of a regenerate heart or the work of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a public expression of faith in Jesus and a public declaration of following Jesus as a disciple. Baptism should never be used to give a child assurance of salvation. Our only assurance of salvation is a continuing faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Salvation of any man is wholly the work of God. No man can save himself by works of his own doing (Ephesians 2:8,9). However, this does not mean we are not to labor in proclaiming the gospel to our children.

There is wisdom in waiting for the baptism of a child, and waiting is not passive. Parents can actively wait for baptism and encourage the faith of a child in the following ways:

1. *Pray both privately and with their children for their salvation. (1 Corinthians 3:5-7)*
2. *Talk about and explain the gospel plainly in numerous ways from various passages of Scripture so that a child understands the gospel. (Acts 2:38-39)*

3. *Teach your children God's laws and commands throughout the day. (Deuteronomy 6)*
4. *Encourage and assist your children in exercising disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and Scripture memorization. (Psalm 119:9-11)*
5. *Establish consistent family worship times that include reading the Bible, singing, and praying together as a family that highlights Jesus.*
6. *As children experience the effects of fallen humanity frame life events and circumstances with a biblical worldview that shows our need for Jesus.*
7. *Express often your personal need of Jesus and your gratitude for His finished work on the cross. Talk about the gospel as a gift from God. (Romans 6:23)*
8. *Worship with your children and talk with them about the worship service afterwards so that you can frame worship in awe and wonder of God's saving work through Jesus for sinners.*
9. *Teach and talk with your children about the benefits of obeying God and the effects of disobeying God by reading Proverbs together.*
10. *Correct and discipline your children within the framework of the gospel.*