

@THE ORCHARD

NOVEMBER 2018

How old should my child be before he or she gets baptized? What about communion?

What joy that these questions are being asked at The Orchard! It means that parents are investing in the spiritual lives of their children. And kids are grasping the gospel truths that they're learning at church.

These aren't simple questions. How do we answer them? Two foundational principles will help.

BAPTISM AND COMMUNION ARE RICH WITH BLESSING

Our church's statement of faith says: *The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.*

In baptism, a Christian publicly declares his or her faith in Jesus Christ to the church, and then is immersed and raised up out of water, visibly and tangibly expressing the way the believer is united to the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-4). This one-time act is a joyful confirmation of the presence of saving faith in a Christian's life.

In communion, a Christian receives the bread and the cup, visibly and tangibly expressing the way that Christ's body was given and His blood shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). This ongoing act joyfully nourishes the believer month-after-month, as we remember what Jesus did for us.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE IS IN OUR DNA

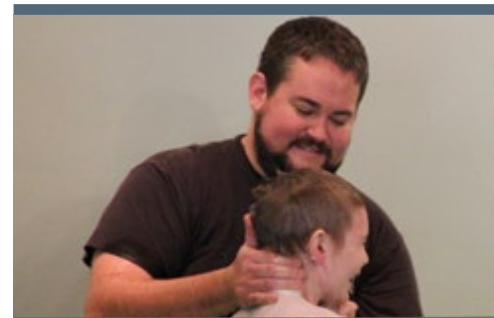
Look again at our statement of faith. We believe baptism and the Lord's Supper are *ordinances*—commands of Jesus to be obeyed. Yet, our statement doesn't indicate a particular age when a child should do this. We believe this reflects the teaching of the New Testament, which makes no comment regarding how old a child should be before obeying these two ordinances.

Since our church began, our congregation has maintained that each family has *freedom of conscience* on these matters. That is, each family works with their pastor to decide when's the right time for their kids to be baptized and begin taking communion.

But this freedom of conscience means that families will make different decisions about when their children should be baptized and begin taking communion. It even means that pastors—in our own church—will have different viewpoints.

It's important to highlight, then, the importance of *charity and grace* toward families who come to different conclusions than we do, because freedom of conscience is in our DNA.

Yet though we believe this freedom is good, it can nonetheless leave parents mystified, feeling like they don't have the direction they need to guide their children on these important issues. So here are some recommendations:



FOUR THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT BAPTISM:

- *Genuine faith in Christ is ultimately the only criterion for baptism.*

While maturity can and does affirm the genuineness of faith, the Bible does not require us to reach a certain level of maturity before baptism. The Scriptures call us, most simply, to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).

- *Baptism is a “one-time deal.”*

While the Lord’s Supper is a monthly event, baptism happens once in a Christian’s life. This gives us cause for greater thought and more careful consideration regarding the “when” of baptism.

- *It’s good for a child to be old enough to “feel the pull of the world” before they’re baptized.*

A wise pastor was once asked the question we’re asking today, “How old should my child be before he or she gets baptized?” His response: “Old enough to feel the pull of the world.” His point is that it’s easier to be sure that faith is genuine in a child whose faith has been tested by sin and temptation. A tested faith helps prove a child’s readiness!

- *It’s unusual to baptize a pre-adolescent child.*

This is not a rule or a policy but it is far easier to affirm genuine faith in a teen than in a child. For not only has the teen’s faith been tested, but a teenager also has greater capacity to articulate faith in Jesus.

Since genuine faith in Christ is at the heart of the question we’re asking, here are...

FOUR EVIDENCES OF SAVING FAITH TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR KIDS:

- *Love for Jesus*

Does your child grasp with head and heart who Jesus is and what He’s like? Does he or she demonstrate love for Him in any noticeable way?

- *Love for the Bible*

Does your child want to read the Bible? Does he or she grasp that it’s different from all other books – showing an eagerness to learn from it at home or at church?

- *Hatred of Sin*

Has your child ever been sorry for sin – not just the consequences of it? Has he or she ever cried over sin or shown their hatred for sin in some tangible way? Does your child understand both that “I *have* sinned” and that “I *am* a sinner?”

- *Love for Christians*

Does your child want to be around God’s people? Is he or she beginning to understand the importance of the local church?

While no Christian will show perfect evidence of all these traits, these are typical, biblical signs that genuine faith is alive in a child’s life.

As you’re examining the evidence, it’s good to engage your kids with a few questions.

FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR KIDS:

- *What is the gospel?*

This is key. To *publicly* profess faith in baptism, your child should be able to *privately* articulate faith to you.

- *What does baptism mean?*

Simply, does your child know what he or she is doing? Can he or she articulate something along the lines of what is said in our statement of faith?

- *Does baptism get you into heaven?*

It’s important to make sure that your child isn’t under the impression that baptism has saving power. So the answer you’re looking for here is “No!”

- *Why do you want to be baptized?*

With Christian parents and a strong children’s ministry, many kids may be able to state the facts about the gospel and baptism. But this question helps make sure they are *personalizing* those truths.



If there's evidence of faith in your child, and if they're answering these questions well, it's likely that your child is soon ready to be baptized! But asking yourself a few questions will help bring additional clarity.

FOUR QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- *Is my child taking initiative?*
Is my child asking to be baptized because I've been pushing them, or because he or she genuinely wants to do so? We want our kids to proclaim their *personal* faith in Christ through baptism!
- *What does your pastor think?*
Is your pastor seeing the same genuine faith in your child as you are? It would be helpful to include Orchard Kids' teachers, youth leaders, and other parents in this question, as well!
- *Am I persuaded that my child understands baptism?*
Does my child really grasp the lifelong commitment he or she is making? Does my child grasp that baptism is a *symbol* and not something that saves?
- *Will my child remember his or her baptism?*
Some kids baptized at an early age end up feeling that they've missed out on the *blessing* of baptism because they were not old enough to remember the public profession that they made. This, in turn, makes them want to get rebaptized when they're older, even though baptism is a one-time event. Is your child old enough to avoid this regret?

The more you see these evidences in your child and the more these questions can all be answered affirmatively, the more you should feel freedom, peace and joy in your conscience about your child's readiness to be baptized!

By and large, the considerations above **will also serve you and your child well when it comes to the Lord's Supper.**

- *Just like baptism, genuine faith in Christ is ultimately the only criterion for communion.*
- *You'll want to see the same evidences of faith, the same grasp of the gospel, and a similar understanding of what communion is and isn't before your child starts joining the church at the Lord's Table.*

But with the similarity between these two ordinances, it's good to consider how your child's readiness for baptism and communion connect. Here's our recommendation:

TWO WAYS FORWARD FOR COMMUNION:

- *Wait for your child to be baptized before he or she begins taking communion.*
This is simple, logical and clear. Your child obeys the ordinance of baptism—the *one-time* event—before obeying the *ongoing* ordinance of communion. This is likely the pathway for parents who encourage their children to be baptized at a younger age.
- *Or use communion to prepare your child for baptism.*
In this viewpoint, your child begins receiving the Lord's Supper before getting baptized. This allows you to celebrate and affirm your child's faith in Christ, even while you examine his or her readiness for baptism. This is likely the pathway for parents who encourage their children to wait to be baptized until they're of an *older* age, after they've been tested.

We praise God for the way parents at The Orchard are taking the blessing and obedience of these two ordinances so seriously, and we rejoice over kids who are eager to be baptized and receive communion!

As you work through your freedom of conscience on these issues, we—your pastors—would be absolutely delighted to talk all this through with you face-to-face. Let's have a conversation! **—Pastor Tom Olson**

UPCOMING PREACHING SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER 10/11

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
–DENNIS COLTON
BARRINGTON–TOM OLSON
CHICAGO–ANDRÉ BALLARD
ITASCA–BRAD WETHERELL
MARENGO–KYLE GREEN
NORTHFIELD–TOM YOON

NOVEMBER 17/18

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
–DENNIS COLTON
BARRINGTON–TOM OLSON
CHICAGO–ANDRÉ BALLARD
ITASCA–BRAD WETHERELL
MARENGO–JARED HENDRICKS
NORTHFIELD–JOSH PARSONS

NOVEMBER 24/25

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
–DENNIS COLTON
BARRINGTON–TOM OLSON
ITASCA–BRAD WETHERELL
MARENGO–JARED HENDRICKS
NORTHFIELD–JOSH PARSONS

DECEMBER 1/2

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS
–COLIN SMITH
BARRINGTON–TOM OLSON
CHICAGO–ANDRÉ BALLARD
ITASCA–BRAD WETHERELL
MARENGO–JARED HENDRICKS
NORTHFIELD–JOSH PARSONS

GLOBAL MINISTRIES UPDATES | FOCUS AREAS: N. INDIA, BALKANS, SE ASIA

BRIAN & AUDREY JOSE | Radstock Ministries/Balkans



Brian is Executive Director of Radstock Ministries, which seeks to pray, send laborers and come alongside national workers for the advance of the gospel in the Balkan region of Europe. In the 1980s, Brian and Audrey smuggled Bibles, Christian books, printers and ink to Communist countries. They went everywhere except Albania due to strict borders until the Lord opened the country in the early '90s. Praise God it is now Albanian churches that lead much of the gospel work in that region. Pray for Brian and Audrey, who live and serve in Durrës, Albania, equipping national pastors and church planters in the spread of the gospel. Pray for Kujtim and Lauren Rushiti, and others whose names cannot be mentioned, who are among those Radstock has sent to plant churches in the very hard soil of the Balkans.

TOM & EVELYN MACINTOSH | PGC Foundation/SE Asia



Tom served in cross-cultural ministry in Malaysia for four years and 26 years in cross-cultural experience in the Philippines. Tom and Evelyn have currently been retooling, retraining and reenergizing their team of workers, preparing for new ministry launch. Pray for team members as they are learning new computer skills that will prove invaluable in their ministries. Praise for seeing many salvation miracles happening through the ministry of those serving with Tom & Evelyn on the frontlines. Pray for those serving to experience their paths being lit by the Lord and to be kept safe in their travels.

BRIAN & GINNY TEEL | Ministry on Discipleship and Holism/Asia



Brian and Ginny are in the final three months of training their replacements after leading the work in one Asian nation for the past fourteen years. Pray that the new leadership team will be trusted and effective as they move into place with their host nation. Pray that Brian and Ginny will experience the Lord's guidance and leadership as they transition into a leadership position with the global portion of their organization.

BILL & PEGGY | Asia



Bill and Peggy train church leaders for effective service in their local churches. Bill leads a house church of people from other countries that meets on Sunday morning for worship, teaching and encouraging one another. Pray for large church networks to provide better training for those who are being sent from their church body to establish churches in other areas. Pray for Peggy as she teaches English classes at a language training center. Pray for Peggy and Bill as they have been asked to act as a sounding board for broken relationships among a fellowship of believers, reaching forgiveness as God calls for in His word.

MARIO & SUZANA CASNI | Reach Beyond/Croatia



Mario felt the call to ministry while attending Moody Bible Institute. He realized the truth of the Great Commission at that time and counted on God to equip and fill him with the desire to serve in mission as a vocational calling. Mario and Suzana have been serving in Croatia since 2009. Mario currently produces Christian media programs with gospel messages. Pray for their new season of broadcasting to reach many through the media of radio. Pray for their team as they establish new goals and realize needed finances to produce shows and for the broadcasters to continue giving them excellent timeslots for the episodes.

SE ASIA TEAM | The Orchard



The team from The Orchard arrived at their destination and joined their new friends for worship and teaching. During small group time, each person shared hardships and personal devotion patterns. Though the details were vastly different, their common love of the Lord and gratitude for His faithful provision enriched their prayers and strengthened their bond as brothers and sisters in Christ. Praise for the opportunity to provide Christmas in October to the frontline missionaries in the form of food, clothing and computers to take home. Praise for opportunity of The Orchard team members to lay hands on the people of each distinct region, powerfully commissioning them for their safety and future work to spread the gospel.

