



# Baptizing Children

by David Boyd

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I was barefoot. I trembled with excitement. Walking up the little set of steps seemed to take forever. Before me was the pastor. Beyond him, the waiting congregation seemed so large and distant. What a scary moment it was, and yet not so scary—I felt a peace. My little sister Kathi would be next. She was following in my footsteps just as I realized I was following in the footsteps of Jesus. Suddenly, I was calm. I was about to be baptized in water. That's a big deal when you are eleven years old.

What is it about water baptism that makes you remember the moment over thirty years later? What is it that makes it so special? Is it because you are in front of a lot of people? Is it because Jesus did it too? Is it because you are obeying the command of Jesus? I believe it is all of these things, but I believe it is also because of the promise that is being made before God to serve Him all the days of your life. It is that promise deep down in the heart of a child which plants the root of the gospel deep into a child's soul.

## It's for Children

Water baptism is a command of God, just as prayer, worship, holiness, and faithfulness are

commands of God. Should water baptism be taught to children? Certainly! Children must come to a realization that God has a step of commitment for them to make. God has a command He wants them to obey. They need to realize this important step and take it.



I'm often asked at what age a child should be water baptized. The answer isn't an easy one. Each child is different. It is our goal that each child is water baptized prior to entering the youth group. Before children enter into a new environment full of peer pressure, it is very important for them to solidify their relationship with the Lord by boldly standing before the church and being water baptized.

Many children are ready to be water baptized by seven or eight or nine years of age. When a really young child asks if he can be baptized, especially after he has seen it being done in church, I usually suggest that the parents talk about it and then wait. Wait for that child to ask a second time. To me, that is a clue that God is dealing with his heart and that the child is recognizing his need for this step with God.

## Teach Them What It Means

When children are being baptized in water, it is very important to teach them ahead of time so they will really appreciate what they are doing and what it means in their Christian lives. I especially like to use 1 Peter 3:21, which reads: "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God."

I like to explain that:

**1** baptism symbolizes the salvation you have already received;

**2** water baptism isn't the removal of dirt from the body, but it reminds us that God has removed our sins; and

