

**AUG 27
2017**

**I
HAVE
DECIDED.**



BAPTISM INFORMATION PACKET

What's in this packet?

- > introduction letter**
- > baptism registration form**
- > a description of what we believe about baptism**
- > key scripture references**
- > commonly asked questions**
- > an explanation on how to prepare your testimony**
- > baptism registration**

**AUG 27
2017**

**I
HAVE
DECIDED.**



Dear Living Stones Church friend,

So...you are interested in baptism here at the Living Stones Church!! Awesome! We greatly appreciate you inquiring about this important practice that goes back for 2000 years of church history. Baptism is one of the richest and most celebratory experiences at the Living Stones Church. In baptism, we “go public” with our commitment to follow Jesus and to make him “Lord” and “Savior.” We give public affirmation that we believe he is the “Son of God.” I’m confident that the Living Stones Church will whole-heartedly enjoy watching your baptism experience. I’m thrilled to be able to guide you through the process of being baptized here at Living Stones Church.

August 27th is our next baptism service. The celebration will be at Michiana Christian Service Camp, at 11:00am!

As this baptism service approaches, I have a short list of some very important things I need you to do in preparation:

1. Please read the **Baptism Information Packet** thoroughly. It expresses why baptism is so important to us as a congregation and you as a Jesus-follower.
2. Plan to attend one of the information meetings: **July 30th at 12:15pm, August 1st at 6:30pm, or August 13th at 12:15pm**, in the Worship Center. Email angie@livingstones.cc to sign-up for your meeting time.
3. Fill out the Baptism Registration card. This gives us some very important information such as your shirt size, and who will baptize you. Please bring it to the meeting.
4. Begin to write your story. There is a guide at the end of the packet that will help you write your story clearly and concisely. Remember, your story needs to be told in 2 minutes or less (I know...that is no easy thing!). Bring your story to the information meeting.
5. I will be the default guy in regards to your baptism, unless you have someone else you would like to baptize you. If so, please contact the person you would like to baptize you. This person needs to be a Christ-follower as well. We will need to know who this person is so we can mail to them more detailed information as to what to bring to the service, when to arrive, etc.

Thank you again for your interest in baptism. I’m excited for what God is doing in your life and how your life and the Living Stones Church have connected for the glory of Jesus. While this is a highly celebratory event, it is also an important and thus serious event and one that shouldn’t be taken lightly. We would encourage you to have that in mind as you pray and pursue Jesus as the day approaches. Congratulations on another step forward with Jesus.

If you have any questions before the information meeting, please feel free to contact me.

Because of the Kingdom,

Sam Barrington
Pastor
Living Stones Church
sam@livingstones.cc
291-6852 ext. 3 (office)
274-2296 (cell)

Baptism Registration

Name: (last) _____, (first) _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Date of Birth: (month/day/year) _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Email: _____

T-shirt size: _____

Who would you like to baptize you? _____ (if left blank, our Pastor, Sam Barrington will be the one to baptize you)

Have you contacted this person? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Release Form:

Living Stones Church often records the baptism services on DVD. This DVD will include the baptisms of all the participants. We may use the image of your baptism in a church promotional, website, or other form of communication. Please indicate whether or not you would like for your baptism to be included in the DVD and if we have your permission to use your image for promotional pieces.

☐ Yes, you have my permission to include my baptism in the Living Stones Church DVD and use my image for any promotional pieces.

☐ No, you may not have my permission to include my baptism in the Living Stones Church DVD or use my image for any promotional pieces.

Signed _____
(parent if participant is under 18)

What is Baptism and Why Does Living Stones Church Observe It?

Baptism is an ancient practice of the Christian Church. Its roots can be traced back into Judaism. Baptism was adopted by John the Baptist, and more importantly, by Jesus, as a public act that would testify that one has decided to commit one's self to Jesus as "Lord" and "Savior." The New Testament is full of examples of people who participated in baptism when they placed their faith in Jesus (see the next page for Scripture references regarding salvation and baptism). It is a ceremony which uses water to demonstrate the spiritual cleansing that has taken place in a person's life.

What Does Baptism Look Like?

At Living Stones Church, there are three critical elements to baptism for us:

- 1) It is always **voluntary**.

What we mean by that is that this is *your* decision. No one can make you follow Jesus or believe things about him that you don't rightfully believe. You should not get baptized if you feel coerced in any way. You should not do this because your parents want you to do this. You should not get baptized simply because your spouse wants you to do this and it will make for better marital harmony. You should make this decision **ONLY** because *you* willfully and intentionally want to make this decision to follow Jesus. Baptism in the Scriptures occurred out of people's freedom to make such a decision.



- 2) It is for those **mature** enough to make such a decision.

Ultimately, this is a "grown up" decision. You are pledging in baptism to follow Jesus your whole life. No one should make this decision lightly, nor should anyone make this decision who isn't mature enough to understand what this decision is about. There will always be levels of growth and maturity. None of us understood at our baptism the full implications of discipleship, so don't let perfection of understanding be a barrier to following through with baptism. But, because of the nature of baptism, we do not baptize ("christen") babies or little children who aren't mature enough to understand the significance of baptism and the Christian confession. Other churches have used language of "age of accountability" or "age of understanding" when describing an appropriate time for baptism. While that "age" is subjective and probably different for each individual, we encourage families with questions to be in consultation with Living Stones Church leadership to discern appropriateness of age and maturity.

- 3) It is by **immersion**.

The Greek word *baptizo* literally means "to immerse." As much as we can infer from the New Testament (Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39), we see that the practice of the early church was a full submersion into water. While momentary, this full immersion fully captures the metaphor found in Scripture of baptism symbolizing, our death, burial and resurrection just as Jesus literally went through it

before us. (Romans 6:3-4). Note the look of baptism as one enters the water and arises back out of it.

We have a full baptistry (heated!) in our Worship Center that is large enough to safely baptize. We also utilize an offsite location with a pool during the summer for our large Baptism Celebration.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Anyone who has decided to place their faith in Jesus Christ and is willing to confess him as their “Lord” and “Savior” and acknowledge that he is the Son of God and has yet to do that in the ritual of baptism.

Having said that, we recognize that there are many others who simply have questions about their journey of faith and whether baptism is appropriate for them. Allow us to offer some pastoral advice in this matter:



- If you cannot remember your baptismal experience (because you either never had one or it was as an infant) we would recommend you experience baptism. For you this might not be a new found faith and confession but one that you have held for years but have simply never publicly acknowledged it in baptism. We would recommend the baptismal experience because of its significance (and command) in the New Testament and the resulting blessing we believe it will be for you.
- Many others are experiencing in adulthood a new found faith in Jesus that can't even be compared to what happened to them as a child growing up in their parent's home. And while they might remember being baptized, they clearly did not have the understanding and importance that you feel today. We think it is legitimate for you to consider baptism again.
- If you are plagued with doubts and/or fears, for whatever reason, about your prior baptismal experience, we would like to talk to you about that, but in the end, if releasing you from a fear that God does not intend for you, we would recommend baptism.

Who Does the Baptizing?

Sam Barrington, Pastor of Living Stones Church, is the default baptizer in our services, but you are more than welcome to have someone else baptize you. We ask that they be a committed Christ-follower. We also reserve the right to decline your request. But we recommend parents, other leaders, and people who have had a great impact on your faith development.

What if I'm Still Not Sure I Want to be Baptized?

We desire for you to be thoroughly informed about baptism and to have your questions answered. Please contact Sam Barrington at 291-6852 (office), 274-2296 (cell), or by e-mail at

Baptism Scripture References

I. We enter the Kingdom of God by receiving a baptism of water and the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3-8 - *Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

"Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit."



II. When people received the message of Jesus and the Kingdom in the New Testament they were baptized.

Acts 2:37-41 (day of Pentecost) - *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.*

Acts 8:12 (Samaritans) - *But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

Acts 8:36-39 (the Ethiopian Eunuch) - *As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.*

Acts 9:18 (the apostle Paul) - *And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized.*

Acts 10:47-48 (Cornelius) - *"Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.*

Acts 16:30-34 (The Philippian Jailor) - *Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.*

Acts 19:5 (disciples in Ephesus) - *On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

III. Metaphors of baptism:

A Burial with Christ

Romans 6:1-10 - *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

Colossians 2:9-12 - *...when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*



“Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

A washing of the conscience

Acts 22:16 - *And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.’*

1 Peter 3:18-22 - *And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.*

A new birth

John 3:3-5 - *Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old?”*

Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

Titus 3:3-7 - *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Entrance into Christ and the Body of Christ

Galatians 3:26-27 - *For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 - *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

For the Forgiveness of Sins

Acts 2:38 - *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*



Other Theological Questions about Baptism:

1. What about my infant baptism?

We always begin by affirming faith. For you to consider being baptized as an adult after already having been baptized as an infant is not a repudiation of your family, your faith, or your life in Christ up until this point. We all have different life experiences, understandings, and traditions. All of them have powerfully shaped how we think and act. So, we think it important to understand that our practice of adult believer's baptism by immersion is not a repudiation of your prior experiences.

We do believe that adult believer's baptism is the Scriptural norm, and we would offer it to you as something you should consider in your own life. Thus, we would encourage you to study and consider the possibility of being immersed as an adult. To do so would not necessarily mean that you were leaving an "old life of sin" and "entering into a new life of Jesus" or "turning away from where you were" to "a new life in Jesus," but rather may simply be to "do more" as we "know more." We find this modeled in Scripture itself with the example of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). He was a believer in Jesus, but had a baptismal experience that was less than what was available to him. As he learned more, he did more.

"...a wonderful opportunity to affirm your faith again, and to receive, as baptism was intended, a blessing and grace in the act itself."

If you are convinced that the adult baptism model is the Scriptural model, we would encourage you to consider it for your own life. And in so doing, we think it would be a wonderful opportunity to affirm your faith again, and to receive, as baptism was intended, a blessing and grace in the act itself.

2. Then where, historically, did infant baptism come from?

Infant baptism didn't become a practice of the church until hundreds of years after the time of Jesus. The first three hundred years of Christianity found itself in the context of persecution. It was a small minority group. In about 311 A.D., an emperor by the name of Constantine, whose mother was a Christian, felt he had a vision of Jesus (and even credited Jesus for a victory during battle), and at the end of his life looked favorably on the church ending persecution and even gifting to the church large buildings (called basilicas) to meet in.

By the beginning of the Fifth century (412 A.D.), another Emperor, Theodosius I, a Christian, ordered an edict that basically stated, that to be a Roman Citizen one had to be a Christian. You can imagine the massive sway in culture as Christianity went from being a persecuted minority to now being, not just the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, but the only sanctioned religion of the Roman Empire. Lots of changes occurred at this time (and not for the good). But you can imagine if you were a Roman citizen you would want your child, born into your home, to have all the rights and privileges of being a Roman citizen. And at the time, the outward identifying mark of being a Christian was baptism. Therefore, Roman families began to baptize their newborns to signify that they were Christians and thus true Roman citizens.

A brilliant theologian and bishop of the Catholic Church, Augustine (4th – 5th century from Northern Africa) later, to justify the practice of infant baptism, developed a doctrine of "original sin." In

it, Augustine said that a child was born in sin and the guilt of sin remained on the child, and thus there was need for baptism to cleanse the child.

In answer to that, we believe that a child is innocent at birth and has no culpability in regards to sin and is innocent before God and therefore has no fear of hell or being cut off from the Kingdom of God. We believe this to be consistent with Jesus' own teachings as he brings a child into the midst of his disciples and encourages them to be more like the child because to such the Kingdom belongs

(Matthew 19:13-15).

Thus, a historical shift occurs in the practice of baptism at the time of Augustine from being a voluntary adult decision of faith for Jesus Christ to a dedication of a baby to God.

We are for both baptism and dedicating children to God. And we agree with much of the language that is used in the Catholic Church for baptism and confirmation. We simply think the rituals themselves should be reversed. We dedicate babies in a ceremony that pledges ourselves to raising them in the faith, but we reserve baptism for that time when that faith will be declared by themselves; when they are old enough to make such a decision.

3. Does my baptism save me?

No. Only God, through his grace saves you. Baptism is not a work that we perform that causes

***“Only God, through
his grace saves you...
Baptism is a response
to his grace.”***

God to save us. We believe no human action has the ability to save us – including baptism. Baptism is a response to his grace.

4. What happens in baptism?

We think there are two dimensions to baptism – symbolic and sacramental.

First, we think baptism symbolizes what has been going on in our life prior to our baptism. Think of it like a wedding. Prior to marriage, two people are going through a lot – learning about each other, trusting one another, growing closer in relationship, moving to greater degrees of love. Most would not be able to put a finger on or date when each thing happened. It sort of snuck up on them. The wedding, in contrast, is the symbol of all those experiences in a concrete time and place. That is why anniversaries are special. They mark a concrete time that has with it the symbolism of all that went on before it. Baptism is like that. Much is going on with our relationship with the Lord. We are getting to know him, learning to trust him, moving in faith, experiencing repentance, and moving to greater degrees of love. Baptism, like a wedding ceremony, is the outward symbol of all that has gone on prior. It is that moment we can date and look back upon to symbolize all that stands behind our relationship with Jesus.

But second, we think baptism is more than symbolic; we think it is sacramental. What we mean by sacrament is that it is a human action and a divine action coming together. And in it, we think God, by the power of His Spirit is doing something. What all he is doing, we still consider to be a mystery, but we believe God is at work by His Spirit in and through baptism. That his grace is flowing and we experience some of the realities spoken of in Scripture, such as receiving the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

5. Will I feel anything?

Maybe. Maybe not. Some have a very powerful and overwhelming experience. Some do not. Either way, our feelings in baptism, whether mundane or ecstatic, never dictates God's grace and mercy in this moment. Each individual is different and thus have different experiences.

Commonly Asked Questions about Being Baptized at Living Stones Church

What does a baptismal celebration service at Living Stones Church Look like?

Since we meet off sight, things will look a little different from a normal Sunday. Once we have all



gathered at our location, we usually begin with worship, a time of celebration in song. Sam will probably share a few words and announcements. Then we will all take communion together. At some point, Sam (or someone) will dismiss all of our baptismal candidates to leave the area to go to the cabins that have been prepared for you to change into your baptismal clothes. While you are preparing, a video of your story will be shown to the congregation. They will then be led to the pool and you will be escorted up to the pool area, where we will begin baptizing each individual. You will have someone guiding you through the entire process (i.e.,

which room you will be in, where to go after that, etc.). After the person baptizing you pronounces the Trinitarian confession ("I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins and so that you may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"), simply bend your knees, plug your nose with your hand or a provided handkerchief, and lean back. The person baptizing you will help you under the water and bring you back up again. Have no fear – no one will hold you under the water and we have never lost anyone in a baptismal service! After the baptism, you will dry off in changing rooms, put on your original clothes, take care of what other logistical preparations are necessary (e.g., make-up, hair, etc.) and you will rejoin your friends/family in the worship service.

Will I get water up my nose?

No. Just hold your nose. A common approach is to hold a hand over your mouth and nose as you enter the water.

What do I wear and what do I need to bring?

Come to the location dressed as you would to enjoy an outside picnic. In a bag, we recommend you bring (for women) a bathing suit and shorts to cover, or (for men) a bathing suit (please no Speedos – not because we think they are sinful...but because it is poor taste :)) or shorts that you don't mind getting wet. We will provide you a cool "I Have Decided" Living Stones Church t-shirt which will be yours to keep (after the baptism we give you a plastic bag to put your wet t-shirt in to take home and launder). You'll also want to bring any towels you will need. After the baptism, when you are dried off, simply put back on the original clothes you came with.

Will I be asked to say anything at the service?

During the baptism service, we want others to know that you believe Jesus is the Son of God and your spiritual story in how you came to that place. We recommend, for your own nerve's sake, that your confession be done prior to your baptism via video (more on that in a moment). However, it can happen live during your baptism. In that case, you will be asked to publicly state that Jesus is your "Lord" and that you believe him to be "the Son of God."

Will my baptism be recorded by picture or video?

Yes. Both. Someone will take a photo of your baptism. And someone will be attempting to get video footage of the baptism. Afterwards, we will give you your photo, a video, and a certificate acknowledging your baptism.

Can my friends and family attend?

YES!! Invite as many as you can! We will provide you an invitational postcard that gives the date and time of the baptismal celebration so you can give it to those you wish to invite.

What if I was immersed at another church?

We do not believe repeated baptisms are necessary. If you have any questions because of concerns or doubts about a prior baptism, we would be more than happy to talk this issue through with you.

Why tell my story?

Telling your story is good for you and also for those who are fortunate to hear it. For you, sharing your story can deepen your faith as you recall what God has done in your life. For those listening, your words are an encouraging reminder that God is active in changing our lives and it gives us a moment to celebrate that, but also to remember how he did the same for us as well. It also gives you opportunity to "publicly" make that declaration that Jesus is Lord.



How long should my story be?

Since there will be many testimonies to hear, we encourage you to keep yours to about two minutes – no longer. We recommend that whatever you can fit on a 3X5 card is sufficient in length. We will set up a time where you can share that story as someone videotapes. And then the tape will be edited (placing you in the best possible light :) and played at the baptismal celebration.

What does a typical story look like?

Included in this packet are three "hypothetical" stories. These examples illustrate the significant parts and length of a testimony. We have also included a guide which will assist you in telling your personal story.

How to Prepare Your Story

Your story is a testimony of how Jesus Christ became a part of your life. The following questions are meant to help you give a clear and concise spiritual biography. Because of the number of people participating we ask you to keep your remarks to about two minutes (I know...easier said than done!). When you are finished with this sheet we'll be happy to talk with you to help you further prepare.

1. What was I like before I made a commitment to follow Jesus? Briefly describe your life without Christ. (Try to pick one theme since you will not have time to tell your entire life story.)
2. What were the circumstances and who were the people who aided you in your spiritual journey?
3. How is your life different now that you are a Jesus follower? (Again, pick one theme; you won't have time to tell it all.)
4. Why are you being baptized? What has led you to make this decision?

Testimony Examples:

1 – I was brought up in a loving Christian home. My parents spent a great deal of effort teaching me about God and the Bible. After High School I stopped attending church and honestly drifted away from the Lord. After my first child, my neighbor invited me to her church. I started to attend. I have been coming to the Living Stones Church for the past two years. Since coming, God has slowly begun to change many things in my life. Today, I am getting baptized to pledge that Jesus is my Lord and I want to follow him for the rest of my life.

#2 – For much of my life, I understood very little about Jesus, the church, or Christianity. My life reflected life apart from God. I basically lived as I pleased. Last year, I hit rock bottom. The way I was living and choices I was making were causing me and the people around me considerable pain. Then I began to hang out with a guy at work named Joe. He began to ask me some serious questions about life, about God, and me. He didn't preach at me and really seemed to care. He told me what God had done for him and how Jesus is willing to forgive me and give me a new life. I believed and asked Jesus to clean me up and to show me how to follow him. Joe and I have been studying the Bible together for the past couple of months. I want to know Jesus better and give him all of my life. Today I desire to declare my belief and commitment to following Jesus. Baptism symbolizes the cleaning that Jesus has done in my life.

#3 – For most of my life, I have attended church, read the Bible and prayed. It seems that God has always been near me my whole life. When I was in high school, I had a close friend die in a car accident. That tragedy led me into a time of grief and confusion about God and my life. I had some loving friends walk through that tough time with me. I'm not sure when God entered my life but I know he has. I believe that Jesus died for the wrong things that I've done and he desires for me to follow him. Today, I want to show God, my friends and my family my commitment to follow Jesus.

Is My Child Old Enough to Be Baptized?

This is a difficult question to answer because of so many different variables of background, understanding, maturity, and development of each individual child. But our theology and understanding of *baptism* and *children* can inform us in this conversation.

1. There is no biblical example of what to do with children of Christian families. Every example we have in the Bible of baptism is of an adult who is converting from paganism or Judaism. It is most likely that your child is not coming from either one of those places in regards to the decision of baptism. This is why Paul uses language of “old life” versus “the new life,” “putting off the old self,” etc. which is very awkward for an eight year old child who is growing up in a family who loves Jesus. This is an important point in that we recognize there is a diversity of practice and opinion precisely because of the lack of biblical examples of how a second generation believer expresses themselves in baptism. Having said that, what we can say in regards to biblical baptism, is that it is ALWAYS adult, voluntary, and by immersion.

2. Children are not in danger of missing out on salvation because they haven’t been baptized. We find that often, baptizing a child is motivated more out of an anxiety found in the parent, than a desire to be baptized by the child. Because of the diversity of religious backgrounds at LSC, it is not uncommon for a bleeding over of other denominational dogma to influence the idea that we want our child to get baptized to be “safe” in God’s eyes. This is most prominent in Catholic backgrounds that teach the doctrine of “original sin” (which was articulated by Augustine in the 4th century and is not found anywhere in the Bible). You need to know that your child, by virtue of the fact that they are a child, *IS* “safe” in God’s eyes. Jesus affirms this over and over in his example and teaching about children (Matthew 19:13-15). The kingdom of heaven belongs to children. Thus, as a parent, you should not push your child into getting baptized out of a fear that they are going to miss out on salvation.

3. Baptism is a mature/adult decision to follow Jesus for the rest of your lives. It is a public affirmation of intent and faith. The nature of this intention requires maturity, understanding, and intentionality on the part of the one being baptized. As a parent, I know it is a difficult thing to gauge these aspects in our children, but you need to know there is nothing lost in encouraging a child to wait until they are older to get baptized. If you wouldn’t let your child stay at home by themselves because of their age and maturity level, why would we expect them to be able to be mature enough to make such a serious commitment of intent as baptism?

4. Baptism is a conscious choice on the one being baptized. We have witnessed many times children getting baptized because their parents want them to get baptized. Baptism should be at the *initiation* and *request* of the one wanting to be baptized. If your child isn’t old enough or mature enough to initiate this process, then they aren’t old enough to get baptized. Practically speaking, did you sign your child up for the baptismal celebration? Are you the one who suggested they get baptized? Are you the one, as a parent, who has taken more initiative in their baptism than they have?

5. Jesus was thirty years old when he got baptized. We’re not saying everyone should wait until they are thirty years old to be baptized, but given the fact that he is the ultimate example in whom we are following, a ten year old should feel no compulsion to get baptized. As a side note, I (Sam) have a 14 year old who has yet to be baptized and if he were to ask, I would encourage him to wait at least a few more years.

6.The one being baptized should be able to wed their life testimony with the act and intention of baptism. Can your child explain why they want to get baptized in a way that reveals they understand the Scripture's teaching on baptism, the basic gospel story, and what that means for the *rest of their lives*? Or, if you asked, will your child say things like, "Because I want to;" "Because I should;" "So God will love me;" "My parents (or grandparents) want me too"? Etc.

7.There are other ways to affirm a child's love for Jesus than baptism. Children love Jesus. And there are natural faith development stages where children become aware and awakened to that love for Jesus that is exciting and awesome. In those moments, you as parents, and we as a church, need to find ways for those children to say they love Jesus and for us to affirm the heart journey they are on. Baptism is not the only way to affirm a child's love for Jesus. We should not equate the moment a child feels that awaking of love toward Jesus as the time to get baptized.

8.In every other area of life, we recognize that age is critical in making certain decisions. There is a reason why contracts are not binding when signed by those under age 18. There are reasons why you don't take seriously an eleven year old who declares they are going to marry a certain classmate. Etc. The reason is because you know they aren't old enough or mature enough to make such decisions. Baptism is the most important decision a person can make. It is establishing what the rest of their life will look like. It is more serious than who they will marry. It is more important than what they will major in at college. Because of the nature of the decision, baptism should be reserved for those who are old enough and mature enough to make such decisions. Because the Bible doesn't give us "an age" (some churches talk about the age of accountability, which is a great concept, but not clearly defined by Scripture), if you have any reservation or hesitancy yourself because your child really is so young - then wait! Affirm their love for Jesus. Praise them for it. And build in them a *future* anticipation for the day when they will get baptized.

We hope these points will help you and bring clarity to your thinking in regards to baptism and your child. By way of rule, we have decided that at LSC we ***WON'T*** baptize your child if:

- They are not yet in 6th grade in school.
- Or after a brief conversation with a leader at LSC they seem unable to articulate in a way that reveals understanding and maturity their desire to be baptized.