

Let the Children Come to Me. *(Mark 10:13-15)*

Having a baby in the family awakens a new sense of wonder and responsibility, so we are glad that you have enquired about Infant baptism.

The Bible speaks about Baptism as a very important step. Therefore parents should not decide about it too quickly and the Church should be careful in the handling of it. Both the promises and conditions of Baptism need to be honestly thought through before anyone makes a decision.

This explanation asks three important questions. Your own answers will help you decide whether the baptism of your child is an appropriate step at this time or whether it would be best to wait.

In the Old Testament God chose Abraham to be a Father to a special people. He was promised that his child would enjoy special privileges through the ages. *“And I will continue this agreement for it shall be between me and your children as well. It is a contract that I shall be your God and the God of your posterity.”* Gen 17:7-8.

God’s promises still hold true today. They are available to every person who comes to trust in Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament, Christian people have become the new People of God and so this first promise to Abraham is very meaningful to Christian parents.

Baptism is for Christian People.

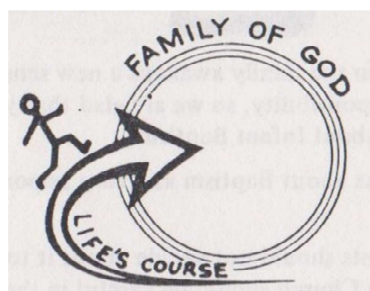
Sometimes people profess to be Christian because they were born or educated in what is regarded as a *“Christian country”* or because they have attended a Christian church.

What is the difference then between a person who thinks they are Christian and a true Christian?

A true Christian can be described in this way. *“To all who receive Him. (Jesus) who believed in his name, He gave power to become the Children of God.* John 1:12.

The true Christian is a person who has received Jesus Christ by trusting and handing over the controls of their life to Him. This alters a person’s life-attitudes and direction of living. *“For if any person is in Christ he becomes a new creation altogether, the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new.”* 2 Cor.15:17.

The true Christian then through a vital connection with Jesus Christ becomes part of the family of God.



Although unworthy the Christian is sure about God's love. In his death on the cross Jesus Christ has done everything that needed to be done to secure our forgiveness and freedom. This makes living different and the natural reaction is to want to worship God for His goodness

Christians worship together regularly on Sunday and their attitude during the week is one of obvious love for God and other people. The Christian is always keen to discover more about his Lord and to share the new life he has found with others.

The Baptismal Service requires the parents who bring their children to Baptism to be Christian. Only parents who have opened their own lives to Jesus Christ can lead their children to Him, and to all that God desires to give them. This is why it is important for every parent to ask, *"Am I truly a Christian according to the New Testament? Have I ever decided to welcome and claim Jesus as Lord of my life?"*

Baptism is Meaningful

God's promises to people through history always included the children and family. Peter said, *"For God's promise was made to you and your children and to all who were far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself. (Acts 2:39)*

Even today the child born of Christian parents is born into a household that enjoys the presence and promises of God in a special way. Baptism is a public sign that the church and Christian parents adopt to say that this is true.

Just as a wedding ring is a visible sign of an invisible truth, so baptism is a similar sign that says long before this child could adopt an attitude to God, God had adopted an attitude towards him/her. Along with his parents this child is part of the Family of God, and has a right to the blessing God promises.



Baptism does not give a child a *"lump of goodness"* or make anyone a Christian. Recognising that Baptism does not do anything to the child, it is valid to ask, *"How is God's promise of blessing fulfilled?"* God does not give his promise without clearly showing the conditions necessary for its fulfilment.

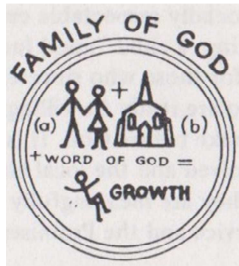
(a) The Parent/s

The first condition: The parents believing the promises of God need to regularly pray for their child and diligently teach him/her the truths of God. They promise to give the child access to a Christian home by surrounding the tender impressions of their children with the love of God and genuine Christian values. The parents, not Christian teacher or leader, is the most important influence in the life of the child and the parent/s are the only people who can fulfil this key condition to Baptism.

(b) The Church.

The second condition: The child must have access to the worship and teaching of the church. As the child grows older he/she will need the encouragement of Christian friends, so the local believers

promise to maintain a community of faithful people who will help your child to grow in the knowledge and love of God.



This is why it is important for every parent/s to ask, *“Am I honestly prepared to accept these responsibilities before God?”*

Baptism is Preparation.

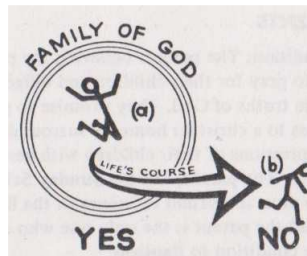
Your child will outgrow childhood only too soon and pass into the adult world. By this time he/she should have heard the Word of God through the home and church. By this teaching, since their baptism they are now conscious of what their parents believe and what they believed for him/her at the time of their baptism.

Now with their own mind and ability they must choose for themselves. All that has gone before has been a preparation for this moment.

- (a) Your adolescent child will personally put their trust in Jesus Christ, so confirming the faith of their parent/s and possessing the promises of God for Himself/Herself.

OR

- (b) Your adolescent child will freely choose not to receive Christ or to respond to the invitation God has provided at that time.



It is the responsibility of both the parent/s and the church to ensure that young people are encouraged and challenged to decide about Christ for himself/herself.

This is why it is important for every parent to ask, *“Am I prepared to ensure that in youth my child will have the opportunity and challenge to decide for himself/herself about Jesus Christ.”*

In conclusion then we can say Infant Baptism is much more than a socially respectable ceremony that in some way brings a child “good luck”. It is obviously set apart for those who have clearly responded, sincerely love Jesus Christ and who intend to fulfil the promises they make before God. It is only then that the parent/s involved and the local church congregation can feel that they are meaningfully participating in the Baptismal Service and the rich promises of God that surround it.