

BAPTISM PREPARATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Goals and Youth Baptism Policy

Faithfully preparing a young person to follow the Lord in the obedience of baptism is an important responsibility that is entrusted to Christian parents and to the church. Bethel Church elders affirm that parents are responsible for instructing their children in the Christian faith and overseeing their spiritual development. We also affirm that the church is responsible for facilitating and overseeing the discipleship ministry of the church and for sustaining and guarding the ordinance of baptism. Therefore, it is fitting for leaders of the church and parents to work together in the process of preparing young people for baptism.

Primary goals of this process are to:

- Glorify Christ and His redeeming work.
- Discern the authenticity of the child's faith and readiness for baptism.
- Lead the child to a solid understanding of the Gospel and the meaning of baptism.
- Prepare the child for giving a publicly credible profession of faith.

Secondary goals of this process are to:

- Encourage, support, and equip the spiritual leader of the home for the discipleship of his/her children.
- Provide an opportunity for the child to affirm their intention and desire to follow Jesus in a decisive and memorable way.
- Provide an opportunity for the immediate family and the wider community of believers to publicly affirm, support, encourage, and pray for the child.
- Prepare and equip the child for membership in the local church.

Youth/Child Baptism Policy

Based on these goals, it is recommended by the elders of Bethel Church that children be strongly encouraged to wait until at least age 11 before being baptized.

- This is a recommendation not a requirement.
- There is no biblical instruction concerning a minimum age for baptism. This is a matter of pastoral wisdom.
- Age 11 is arbitrary but is a matter of pastoral recommendation from trusted sources.
- This recommendation fits with a broader discipleship strategy for children growing up in Christian homes.
- Children above age 10 are more likely to:
 - o Think independently.
 - o Remember the baptism experience.
 - o Appreciate the importance and significance of baptism.
 - o Have the spiritual maturity and intellectual capacity for a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the Gospel.

Youth Baptism Preparation Process (Ages 11-17)

Prospective Youth/Child baptism candidates include young people ages 11-17 who have not been baptized, and younger children whose parents have asked to be contacted about having their child baptized.

Parental Consent before beginning the preparation process is desired for candidates under age 18.

Identifying a Mentor

- Each candidate will need a mentor (coach) to lead them through the preparation process. The mentor will also assist and encourage the young person in his/her walk with the Lord following the baptism.
- Candidates in the same family may share one mentor, but the mentor will be encouraged to meet with the candidates separately.
- The candidate's father is encouraged to be the mentor if he is a believer and living in the home.
- If the father is not a believer or not living in the home, the candidate's mother, or grandparent or another mature believer should assume this responsibility.
- If neither parent is a believer, the candidate may select (or seek help in finding) a mature Christian mentor.

Steps in the Baptism Preparation Process

Together, the mentor and student/candidate will proceed through the following steps:

Step 1 – Individual 1:1 sessions between mentor and candidate

Candidate and mentor work at their own pace through the booklet, *Established in the Faith*, which includes the following:

1. Preparation/Laying the Groundwork
2. Understanding the Gospel
3. Assurance of Salvation
4. Affirmation of Faith
5. The Meaning of Baptism
6. Preparing a Testimony

Established in the Faith is available to you for free from Bethel Church for this baptism preparation process (ask your student's pastor or inquire at the main Welcome Desk or at the Children's Welcome Desk), or you can purchase a copy at www.truth78.org/established-in-the-faith.

Step 2 – Testimony

We encourage candidates to give their testimony at least one time prior to their interview and baptism. Our youth staff are happy to arrange a time for them to give their testimony in a small group or during one of our youth gatherings. Also, parents can arrange a time for them to share their testimony when friends or family are gathered together.

Step 3 – Baptism Interview

Once the mentor communicates that the candidate is ready to move forward with baptism (and in some cases church membership) the candidate will be interviewed. The goal of this interview is to hear the candidate's profession of faith and confirm that there is a sufficient understanding of the Gospel and the meaning of baptism. The interview team will include at least one church leader and another adult who may have a significant role in the young person's life (perhaps a youth ministry volunteer, Sunday School teacher or small group leader).

Step 4 – Baptism Service

If the baptism/membership team recommends the candidate for baptism, the candidate will be scheduled for an upcoming baptism service. An approved candidate may participate in any of our regular baptism services.