

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"When Should Children Be Baptized? – Part II."*

With baptisms coming up on Easter I started preaching a few sermons to help equip the families determine whether their children should be baptized. That's exactly what we are doing as a family.

Because we believe our children must be saved before being baptized I would like to give you some evidences of salvation to look for in your children's lives. While no parent can know for sure that their child is saved, I do believe these should be helpful.

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Also, these are good evidences to look for in anyone's life, child or adult alike. I have looked for these evidences in my life, and I hope you will do the same.

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Go ahead and open your Bibles to Matthew 11. While you do I will quickly review the evidences we discussed last week.

The first evidence...

**Lesson one: evidence of salvation to look for in your children (part one) godly sorrow.**

Repentance is required for salvation, and it comes from godly sorrow over sin...

**2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death (NKJV).**

Worldly sorrow is regret, not over the sin itself, but over the consequences.

Godly sorrow, on the other hand, is sorrow over the sin, and it produces repentance, or turning from the sin to Christ, which is why Paul says it leads to salvation.

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The next part of Lesson one...

**Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part two) spiritual fruit.**

This flows from the previous evidence because if children, or anyone for that matter, are genuinely repentant, fruit will be produced.

**Matthew 3:8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.**

When we put off something, or repent, we must put on something else.

The vacuum that's created will be filled with fruit or good works if the repentance is genuine.

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The next part of Lesson one...

**Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part three) spiritual hunger and thirst.**

None of us, child or adult alike, always want to pray, read the Bible, fellowship, or go to church...this is even the case for the most mature Christians.

But every Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit must have some spiritual hunger or thirst. There's something wrong if people say they are Christians, but they NEVER want to pray, read the Bible, listen to sermons, go to church, or talk about spiritual things.

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Now again, to make this personal to our children...

Do they have an interest in spiritual matters? Do they pray and read the Bible on their own sometimes...or do we always have to force them to do so?

Children who have put their faith in Christ, want to worship the Christ who has saved them.

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The next part of lesson one, which is new for this morning...

### **Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part four) spiritual understanding.**

Scripture is clear that if we are believers God has opened the eyes and ears of our hearts to understand spiritual truths.

Let me show you some verses that make this point, and then we can talk about the application for our children.

In verses 20 to 24 notice Jesus is talking about the unrepentant cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida. These people rejected the gospel, which is to say they rejected the spiritual truth preached to them. Look what Jesus says in verse 25...

**Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you HAVE HIDDEN THESE THINGS from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;**

These cities had spiritual truths **hidden** from them, but the same spiritual truths are revealed to **little children**. Jesus isn't talking about little children physically. He's talking about little children spiritually, which is to say new believers.

The point is believers, even baby ones, understand spiritual truths.

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Look two chapters to the right at **Matthew 13**. The context is Jesus preached the parable of the sower. In verse 10 the disciples asked him why he spoke in parables, and then look at his answer in verse 11...

**Matthew 13:11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.**

So there are 2 groups:

- Believers, who have been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven
- Unbelievers, and understanding and spiritual insight have not been given to them

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Turn to the right to **1 Corinthians 2**. Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians.

We could have sermons on each of these evidences, and in the past I have preached on them and taught on them in Sunday school. But I'm trying to get this done before Easter, so you're getting an elevated view that doesn't cover all the verses for each evidence.

With that in mind, **1 Corinthians 2**, is probably the clearest teaching on this particular evidence in all of Scripture.

The context is Paul is talking about preaching Christ. Look at **verse 7**...

**1 Corinthians 2:7 But we impart a SECRET AND HIDDEN WISDOM of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.**

This is just like Jesus said. Who is this secret and hidden wisdom secret and hidden from? Unbelievers.

**1 Corinthians 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**

This makes sense: obviously if they believed the gospel they would not have crucified Christ.

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Now Paul changes direction and talks about believers...

**1 Corinthians 2:9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—10 these things God HAS REVEALED TO US through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.**

Notice Paul’s use of the word **us**. He’s including himself because he’s talking about believers who have had spiritual truths revealed to them.

**1 Corinthians 2:11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**

Notice the word **we**, like the word **us**, because Paul is including himself with other believers. The Holy Spirit helps us understand spiritual truths.

**1 Corinthians 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths TO THOSE WHO ARE SPIRITUAL.**

**Those who are spiritual** is a way to refer to believers, and spiritual truths have been imparted to us.

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In contrast look what he says about unbelievers...

**1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**

Just like those who are spiritual refers to believers, the **natural person** refers to unbelievers...who find spiritual truths **foolish**, because they’re not able to **understand them**.

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There are quite a few other verses I could give you, but you get the point.<sup>1</sup>:

Believers understand spiritual truths and unbelievers don’t.

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Let’s consider what application this has for our children...

You’ve probably heard me say many times that we must be Christian families who worship more than just on Sundays. What that means is as families, Monday through Saturday, we should be praying, reading the Word together, maybe singing.

This allows us to see if our children understand spiritual truths. If we don’t talk about spiritual truths with our children, will not be able to see if they understand them.

Now with that said, if you remember last week, especially when we talked about spiritual hunger and thirst, I had to provide some balance. Even though Christians have a spiritual hunger and thirst, no Christians want to pray, read the Bible, go to church, or fellowship, all the time.

Similarly, there are many spiritual truths that the greatest theologians don't fully understand. I think some of the most spiritually mature and insightful men I've known have acknowledged that there are plenty of things they don't know.

So when we talk about children, we are not expecting them to know all the deepest theological insights.

But we are expecting them:

- To understand the simpler truths in Scripture
- To connect the dots between different accounts

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But let me tell you what the difficulty is...

When children are raised in the church they can answer, what I would call, fill in the blank type questions. For example, if you say:

- *Who built the ark?*
- *Who led the Israelites into the promised land?*
- *What did Jesus use to feed the 5000?*

They are probably going to be able to answer these questions. It doesn't mean they have spiritual insight, it just means they have good memories.

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So ask questions that involve elaboration, discussion, and insight into the Word. Try to have conversations that reveal an understanding of spiritual truth that goes below the surface.

In a sense, look for them to be able to say things that look like God revealed it to them. Think of Jesus's words to Peter...

**Matthew 16:17** “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For FLESH AND BLOOD HAS NOT REVEALED THIS TO YOU, BUT MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Divine Teacher, a child indwelt by the Holy Spirit will have at least some grasp of spiritual truths.

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Let's move to the next lesson...

**Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part five) perseverance through trials.**

As a parent I think the only thing that is much worse than going through trials ourselves is seeing our children go through trials. Any parent when watching their child suffer would gladly suffer in their place.

With that said, as difficult as it is to see our children suffer, one of the benefits is it reveals their faith. We can see where their hope is...or is not.

Because there are 2 things, primarily speaking, that trials do:

1. They mature us
2. They test our faith and reveal the sincerity or genuineness of it when it survives the trial:
  - **James 1:3** says **trials test our faith**
  - **1 Peter 1:7** says **trials prove or reveal the genuineness of our faith.**

The important thing to remember with trials is it's not a question of whether we survive the trial. Plenty of people experience trials and don't survive them. The most extreme example is a martyr. They experience a trial that results in the end of their life. We are not talking about whether we physically survive a trial.

We are talking about whether our faith survives the trial.

One of the most precious things to God must be when people suffer, and even when they come to the end of their lives still suffering, they maintain their faith in Him. Not cursing him as Job's wife told him to do.

Trials allow us to see whether our children become better or bitter toward God.

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And just as trials reveal when faith is sincere, trials also reveal when faith is not sincere, or is not genuine...

**Matthew 13:21** says **the seed on rocky ground DOESN'T SURVIVE WHEN TROUBLE OR PERSECUTION COMES.**

Jesus said trials also reveal unbelievers.

Without trials it is hard to know if our faith is genuine, because everyone's faith looks good when everything is going well. It has to be tested to be revealed.

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Now once again, I feel like I need to provide some balance. When our children go through trials it's not to say that they are not Christians if they have questions or even doubts. It is very reasonable for people of any age and of any maturity to have questions and even doubts. Questions and doubts are part of our lives on this side of heaven, because none of us have a perfect faith.

So if people are going to have doubts and questions even if they are very mature, we must expect our children to have doubts and questions when they suffer.

But do they give any indication that they don't think God is real simply because of what they are experiencing.

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Let me conclude with this...

When our children go through trials it gives us one of the clearest windows into whether their faith is sincere or insincere

When we see our children suffer and it appears that their faith survives, we can rejoice that it has been tested and proved to be true.

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Go ahead and turn to **1 John**. Right before Jude, which is right before Revelation.

Now the next part of Lesson one...

**Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part six) not habitually disobedient.**

Look at **1 John 1:6**...

**1 John 1:6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

So we can't walk in darkness, which I would say is synonymous with being habitually disobedient.

Now look at **verse 8**...

**1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

So once again we see balance is required:

- We never reach a place of perfect sinlessness. To think otherwise is to lie to ourselves.
- But at the same time can't walk in darkness, or have lives characterized by habitual disobedience.

Let me show you the other verses that make this point. Turn two chapters to the right to **1 John 3**. Look at verse 6...

**1 John 3:6 No one who abides in him KEEPS ON SINNING; no one who KEEPS ON SINNING has either seen him or known him.**

The phrase **keeps on sinning**, which John uses twice in this verse, is key. It doesn't say no one who abides in him sins. It says nobody **keeps on sinning**, which means isn't habitually disobedient, or doesn't have a life characterized by sin.

Look at verse eight...

**1 John 3:8 Whoever MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one born of God MAKES A PRACTICE OF SINNING, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot KEEP ON SINNING, because he has been born of God.**

Again, we see phrases that are synonymous with habitually disobedient:

- **makes a practice of sinning**
- **makes a practice of sinning**
- **keep on sinning**

We aren't saved by our obedience, but habitual disobedience is evidence we are not saved...whether we are a child or an adult.

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Last part of lesson one...

**Lesson one: evidences of salvation to look for in your children (part seven) obedience.**

This is not the same as the previous evidence, and the reason I don't think it's the same is Scripture does not present this is the same thing.

We talked about putting off and putting on. You put off disobedience and put on obedience.

Look at **1 John 2:3**...

**1 John 2:3a By this we know that we have come to know him,**

So John is about to tell us how we know we have come to know God, or are saved...

**1 John 2:3b if we keep his commandments.**

So **keeping his commandments**, or obeying, is evidence we know him.

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Look at verse 5...

**1 John 2:5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:**

So again, we are told that **keeping his word**, which is synonymous with obeying, is how we know we are in Christ, or are believers.

Look one chapter to the right at **1 John 3:7**...

**1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever PRACTICES RIGHTEOUSNESS is righteous, as he is righteous.**

Again, the word **practices** is important. Do our children practice righteousness?

Once again, as you can probably guess by this, we're looking for the balance.

No, they are not perfect. Yes, they still sin. But do we see an amount of obedience to God's commands.

Now I want to discuss a very strong temptation that we can face as parents when we don't see some of the evidences in our children's lives. I share this from experience, because these are the exact same temptations I succumb to when I don't see certain evidences in my children.

Let's walk through the evidences and talk about what we are tempted to do...

Let's say your child does something wrong, but you don't see godly sorrow. Of course this is disappointing and discouraging to us as parents. So our temptation is to start trying to get our children to have godly sorrow by:

- Telling them how bad they are
- Telling them how bad their actions are

We think this is going to make them feel bad, and experience godly sorrow...but it doesn't.

Let's say we are not seeing spiritual fruit in our children's lives. They aren't serving the Lord. So again, we start criticizing them. We say things like:

- *What's wrong with you?*
- *Why aren't you doing anything for God?*
- *We raised you to be a Christian.*

Then guess what?

This doesn't produce fruit in our children's lives.

Our children don't seem to have a spiritual hunger and thirst. So we say:

- *You should be reading your Bible more.*
- *Why don't you want to go to church? Don't you know this is what God wants you to do?*
- *This is what Christians do. Don't you want to be a Christian?*

But it doesn't seem to produce a spiritual hunger or thirst in our children.

Our children don't seem to understand spiritual truths. So we say...

You need to pay better attention at church.

And just to let you know, I do think there are very good times to tell our children that they need to pay better attention to church. I do that.

But if our children's hearts haven't been opened to understanding spiritual truth, then no matter how many times we tell them to pay attention or try harder to understand, it isn't going to help.

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Let's say our children are not obedient. Instead they're habitually disobedient.

We should, obviously, talk to them about the sin and repenting of it, but the bigger issue is that our child is not a Christian.

So what they need is the gospel...and this brings us to lesson 2...

### Lesson two: focus on the Gospel when evidences are lacking.

We can't change our children's hearts and produce these evidences ourselves.

So if the evidences are lacking:

- If there's little to no godly sorrow
- If there's little to no spiritual fruit
- If there's little to no spiritual hunger and thirst
- If there's little to no understanding spiritual truths
- If there's little to no perseverance through trials
- If there's little to no obedience
- If the only thing you see much of is disobedience

Then what our children really need is the gospel:

- So talk to them about their sin
- But even more talk to them about Christ
- Talk to them about spiritual fruit, spiritual truths, obedience and disobedience
- But even more than that preach the gospel to them

It is only the gospel capturing a child's heart that is going to be able to produce these evidences.

Because think about this...

If our children are not Christians, but we're able to help them overcome whatever habitual disobedience they struggle with, now all we have is children who aren't quite as disobedient, but also aren't Christians.

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Let me conclude with this...

I know when our children struggle with sin, often because we're so frustrated with what they're doing, we want to focus on the sin, but we need to focus on their hearts by pointing them to Christ.

In other words, the major focus isn't the sin, it is the child coming to Christ.

So again, I would encourage preaching the gospel to them, focusing on the heart, pointing them to Christ.

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<sup>i</sup> John 14:26, 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

1 John 2:20-21 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.