

Introduction: before continuing “Journey” series, a good time to consider some things pertinent to the life of our church.

- Background at Faith Community, Evangelism Explosion, SBC and 4 year olds. Doctrines of Grace, change to RB setting with more careful churchmanship.
- Academy training, particularly Ecclesiology class. Taught in 2002 when only three small children. Growing consideration with younger people.
- The boundaries of the discussion – *First, this is not a discussion about infant baptism (or Paedobaptism).*<sup>1</sup> *Second, this is not a discussion on whether children can be true believers.* It is specifically what is the relation between younger people, baptism, and church membership.
- Something very important to understand at this point, which is not often considered, is the connection between baptism and commitment to a local church. These two are often separated, and I do not believe that they should be.
- **Adult-only baptism** – Because baptism and church membership are connected, only those who believe the Gospel and are able to fulfill all the responsibilities of church membership should be baptized. Because minors cannot fulfill those responsibilities, they should not be baptized and added to the church.
- **Believer’s baptism** – All those who demonstrate faith and repentance (biblically defined) should be considered as disciples of Jesus Christ, and should therefore be baptized and added to the church to receive the benefits and to fulfill responsibilities of membership as they are capable.

### I. ADULT-ONLY BAPTISM

#### 1.) The Narrative of Acts

- This was the greatest point of struggle that I had, in that it was exegetical. There are instances in which people are explicitly name as to who was baptized and who Saul put into prison. The specific Greek words are those typically used for adult males and adult females - Acts 5:14 8:3 8:12 9:2 17:12

#### 2.) The Nature of Discipleship

- Disciples, as understood in the Jewish context, were those who had committed themselves to a Rabbi or teacher. They were those who formally committed themselves to the Rabbi.
- As can be seen by the Gospels, we have adults who are the disciples of Jesus.
- Luke 14:25ff – Jesus calls disciples to count the cost, to understand what they are getting themselves into, and to be willing to hate all for His sake. Minors, because of their lack of ability to do this, should not be made disciples.

#### 3.) Jesus’ Blessing of the Children

- Luke 18:15ff – when children are brought to Him (in a day when baptism were being done), He does not baptize them, but only blesses them.

#### 4.) The Nature of Children

- 1Corinthians 13:11 – children are gullible, and will generally believe what their parents tell them to.

#### 5.) The Responsibilities of Church Membership

- Voting, church discipline, attendance, tithing, recognition of church leadership. If they can’t handle all of them, then we created a “two-tiered” membership not found in Scripture.

#### 6.) The Sphere of the Family

- Ephesians 6:1 – children are not told specifically to submit to church leaders as membership, but to parents. Their “sphere of discipleship” is exclusively the family.

#### 7.) The Problem of Apostasy

- Teenage years seen as testing time. During teenage years, what happens if they go astray? Do we really want to bring them under church discipline?
- One pastor that I spoke with who holds this position had moved into a “let’s wait until college” because of some departing from the faith.

#### 8.) Clarification of Non-Saving Nature of Baptism

- A pragmatic argument, that this will really show them that they can believe on the Lord and not trust in baptism to save them. In the end, what does it really hurt to encourage them to wait.

### II. BELIEVER’S BAPTISM

- The assumption being that there is no long period between evidence of faith and repentance and baptism, nor of baptism and church membership.

#### A. The Positive Case

##### 1. The Great Commission - Matthew 28

- dual qualifications of profession and evidence
- for younger people, especially in the sphere of the home (testimony of parents and siblings)

##### 2. The Application of the Great Commission – Acts 2

<sup>1</sup> See “Why We Don’t Baptize Infants”, <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=81003181113>

- The promise is to them, their children, and those who are afar off, as many as God will call. This isn't a proof of Paedobaptism, but that those who believe are added to the church.

### 3. Household Baptisms and Acts

- There are the narrative passages in household baptism. What is the point of these then? The emphasis that BOTH men and women are receiving the visible sign (as opposed to the Old Testament).

### 4. Children in the Church

- There is the argument that if one is under the parents, then they cannot be accountable to the church. Does this also apply to the wife? Does this apply to adult children? Can they only join when they move out of the house?
- There should be raised expectations and oversight.
- They too are to be shepherded, not only by parents but by God's undershepherds.
- Without this there can be an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion, and confusion as to whether they are really a Christian. This can negatively affect assurance of salvation.
- At this point there is the claim that a "two tiered" membership is developed that we don't find in Scripture. In the other position there is something worse, a two-tiered discipleship and disobedience to the Great Commission.
- There is the use of wisdom, just as there may be with an newly converted adult just coming out of the world.
- Perhaps there is too much of a democratic view of church leadership instead of the recognition that the elders should have the responsibilities to include/exclude members in certain instances.

### 5. Positive Childlike Qualities

- While the other position is quick to hold out the "negative" quality of gullibility, there are also positive things said about child-likeness, and how all disciples are to be like children in some ways – [Matthew 18:3](#) [Mark 10:15](#) [1Corinthians 14:20](#)

### 6. The Withholding of the Means of Grace

- Baptism and the Lord's Supper are things given by the Lord for the encouragement, examination, and growth of the disciple.
- This includes that of church discipline. Expectations will be the same as adults; love for God and one another; use of gifts in the church
- This is also a means to keep them from apostasy

### 7. Our Confessional and Constitutional Statements

#### 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith

29.2 - Those who do **actually profess** repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance. (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36, 37, 2:41, 8:12, 18:8)

#### RBC Nashville Church Constitution / Article VII – Ordinances / B. Baptism

Only **those who display repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ** are proper candidates for Baptism. **All such persons** should not only be baptized, **but also** ordinarily be joined to a local church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14).

- I believe while the efforts are sincere, they are driven by an inclination to protect the church by legislation. The church, as seen in the NT, is messy business. We don't throw caution to the wind, however we cannot be more legislative than the NT. They had apostasy.
- What does this look like? Not dropping the standards, but discussing with them the same issues one would discuss as an adult. This is not a quick decisionism, but an examination just like anyone else's profession. Asking good questions, leaving room for growth and maturity. Not simply asking "do you love Jesus"
- The other position expects a certain maturity, while the great commission and the NT assumes a relative immaturity and the church is the incubator for maturation.
- The parents and the child (of whatever age) would understand that it isn't just addition in name, but actually coming within the community of the church and responsible. If things "go bad", then it will be dealt with in the same way as an adult.
- The is, I have come to believe, a "chink in the armor" of our churches, raising the bar further than Scripture, and discouraging the next generation unnecessarily.
- This position also gives a more definitive answer to the question of what we do with our children who have been baptized who come in with families.