

# NOW WHAT?

## *A leader guide to have a baptism conversation with your students*

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As a student ministry leader, you're one of the best-positioned people in your student's lives to talk to them about taking their next steps in their faith journey. We want to equip you to be able to have a conversation with your student, to see if baptism is the next step for them in their faith journey.

According to *Barna Research Group*, 94% of adult Christians made their decision to follow Jesus before they were 18 years old. The middle school and high school years of a person's life is pivotal, especially when it comes to making a decision to follow Christ.

Becoming a Christian is more than just choosing to be baptized, however. Simply put, a Christian is someone who recognizes he or she has sinned, is lost, separated from God because of their sin, and has put his or her faith and trust in Jesus to wash away their sins and restore their relationships with God for all of eternity. This ability to even become a Christian hinges on a singular event in history: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This event is simply known as the gospel message.

The personal realization of the gospel (which means Good News) leads us to respond. The biblical response to the Good News is **confession, repentance, and baptism**.

- **CONFESSION:** Confession is an act of humility, and the Bible says that those who confess their sins will find mercy and be healed. Confession includes admitting our sins to God and declaring that we trust Jesus to wash away our sins as our Lord and Savior.
- **REPENTANCE:** Repentance literally means to change directions in our lives. By repenting we choose to stop living for ourselves and choose to devote ourselves to a lifelong relationship with Jesus, where we let him shape and lead our lives.
- **BAPTISM:** Baptism is the biblical instruction that Jesus gave to his original disciples in the passage of Scripture called the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19-20). In his instructions, he tells them to baptize new disciples.

We practice baptism by immersion—in the New Testament, the Greek work for baptism is "baptizo," which means to plunge, dip, or immerse. In every baptism documented in the New Testament, we see immersion utilized as the mode for baptism.

Baptism doesn't produce or earn us salvation, but rather, it's the result of it. Ephesians 2:8 says, "*For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And it's not of your own doing; it's a gift from God, not a result of works.*" Baptism, then, is an outward display of an inward transformation, and is for everyone who has put his or her faith in Christ. As we see in Romans 6, baptism is symbolic of someone dying to his or herself, being buried

with Christ, and becoming a new creation because of Jesus. *Baptism is not a finish line for our faith but a starting line to a new life in relationship with Jesus.*

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## HOW TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION

Be prayerful about opportunities to talk to your students, collectively and individually, about their next steps. One of your primary responsibilities as a group leader is to encourage students to take their next steps in their discipleship. Here's how you can handle baptism conversations with students in Catalyst:

1. **Identify:** Identify if baptism might be a next step for one of your students.
  2. **Talk:** Use the Cheat Sheet to talk to your student about what baptism means.
  3. **Ask:** Ask the student if they would like to get baptized.
  4. **Consent:** If they say yes and you feel like they have a grasp on what baptism means, connect with their parent(s) and ask them if they consent to their student getting baptized.
  5. **Connect:** Let Anne Wilson know that your student is getting baptized! Share the student's name, campus, the date, and service they'd like to get baptized at and that you've received consent from their parent. We currently have baptisms the first Sunday of every month at all of our campuses, so we will get him/her scheduled for the upcoming date. Her email is [awilson@tpcc.org](mailto:awilson@tpcc.org).
  6. **Celebrate:** This is a huge milestone in your student's life. Celebrate this decision in every way you can, both in one-on-one conversations and within your group. What gets celebrated gets repeated, and this may spark other students to consider taking this next step themselves.
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## CONVERSATION GUIDE

Use this Cheat Sheet as a framework for talking with your student about baptism as a next step:

- **Have you made a confession of faith?**
  - If yes, ask them to tell you about it. If no, or they're not sure, talk with them about what confession means.
- **Have you repented?**
  - If yes, ask them to tell you how their life has been changed. If no, ask them what they need to do to change direction in their lives.
- **Do you know what baptism means?**
  - If yes, tell me what it means to you. If no or they're not sure, go through the Scriptures and explain to students what it means.
    - Romans 6:3-5, Matthew 28:19-20.
- **Would you like to get baptized?**
  - If yes, celebrate the decision with them and talk with them about the logistics of baptism (when, what service, who will baptize them), and let them know that you'll reach out to their parents to make sure they know.

- If they're not sure, challenge them to pray about it and reread the Scriptures you read today. Ask them if you can follow up about baptism at a later time.
- If no, honor their decision and encourage them to continue to wrestle with God about what their next steps would be.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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- How do I know if a student is ready for baptism?
  - If in the course of your conversation you're unsure if they're ready, that's OK. What you're wanting to look for in any conversation about baptism is:
    - Contrition about their sin.
    - Confession and repentance have happened.
    - Comprehension of what baptism means.
    - It's their choice and no one else's choice for them.
  - Look out for these things in the conversation:
    - Sometimes well-meaning friends and family members will peer pressure students into getting baptized. Baptism for the wrong reasons is never a good idea.
    - There is a misconception that we have to "clean up" our lives before we can be baptized. That is not true. Confession, repentance, and baptism are responses to God's free gift of salvation. Cleaning up our lives would be a "work" that would earn our salvation (going against Ephesians 2:8).
- What if a student has already been baptized?
  - Some students will want to get baptized again because they sinned or messed up, they want to clean up now. Sometimes baptism maybe the appropriate next step, but if someone has already been baptized for the right reasons you may need to walk through confession and repentance with them, not re-baptism.
  - Students that were baptized as babies and want to get baptized now as a result of their choice are welcome to get baptized. This could take more significant conversation, however, as it could be a touchy issue with family members. The only form of baptism we see in Scripture, and really for the first few centuries of the Church was by immersion. Sprinkling came along to answer the question, "what happens if a baby dies?" Great question. The idea was that we'll take the faith of the parents, and the faith of the church and impute that on the child, baptizing them when they are 8-10 days old usually, so that they are saved. Then later, when they are old enough they can make their faith their own. That is where Confirmation comes in for Catholics and Lutherans. This is a great practice with great intentions. The Bible doesn't condemn this, but it also doesn't speak to it at all. We want to model what baptism was like in Scripture. It came immediately or soon after someone gave a believable profession of faith in Christ. So if someone that was baptized as an infant is not immersed, that doesn't take away

from what their family did, it doesn't negate it, and it isn't disrespectful. In fact, it's the opposite, it's affirming. When their family had them baptized as a baby, it was in hopes that they would be saved by Jesus, know Jesus, and have a faith in Jesus. By being baptized now, on their own terms and as an act of faith, they are living out everything their family originally hoped for. What a great affirmation, it's not a rejection. The Student Ministry staff is available to help you navigate this issue as it can be a tough one for some parents to sort through.

- **What if I don't know an answer to one of their questions?**
  - If you ever don't know an answer to a student's question about baptism (or any topic, for that matter), tell the student that you don't know. It's okay to not know. Students would rather follow leaders that are real than leaders that are always right. After you admit you don't know, tell them that you'd like to help them find the answer to their question, and seek out one of the Student Ministry Staff for help with the question. It's great to empower students to find answers themselves, but we want them to know that we're with them in this journey of finding whatever answers they may have.
- **What if a student's parent does not want their kid to get baptized?**
  - This will rarely happen, but if it does, it's best to create an ongoing dialog with the parent to understand why they don't want their kid to get baptized and answer any questions or concerns they may have. Most commonly parents don't want their kids to get baptized because they were baptized as a baby (see "What if a student has already been baptized?") or the parent doesn't think the student is ready to make that decision. In either circumstance, it is our policy at TPCC to not baptize anyone under 18 without parent consent. If you need help with this conversation with a parent, please reach out to the Student Ministry Staff.
- **What do I do after baptism to help my student continue to grow?**
  - Ensure they're staying connected to their group. Since baptism is just the starting line, God wants to continue to grow that student for the rest of their lives. We grow best in a circle, and that's why groups are such a big deal in Catalyst.
  - Continue to disciple them and point them towards next steps in their faith. God used people in each of our lives to help us to grow and take next steps and now it's our turn to do the same for our students. This happens best through continuing to build relationship.
  - Help them understand post-baptism trials. Giving an overview of Mathew 3 & 4 can be helpful. Jesus' baptism was an amazing moment in the Gospels, you hear the audible voice of God, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus. Incredible moment. As soon as it's over, Jesus is lead out to the desert where He's tempted and pounded by Satan for 40 days. We don't say this to scare people but to let them know of this reality. If Jesus was tempted, we can be sure that we will be too. Be prepared for it and don't be discouraged, there is an enemy who will not be pleased with your baptism and will try to discourage you before and after.