

how to talk to your middle schooler about baptism



Are they going to listen? Am I doing enough? Am I doing too much? When they go off on their own, are they going to remain faithful? Parenting young Christians feels scary, but it doesn't have to be. We hope this guide helps you be confident.

the parent's role in this stage: *prune patiently*

Embrace your preteen's identity through pruning and shaping them on their faith journey. Subtle but consistent nudges in this stage, especially related to baptism, have the potential to propel your child on through the stage that comes next.

are we there yet?

Your preteen has never had a world so big. More hobbies, more interests, more people. They are not quite old enough to have their whole life figured out yet, but they will sure act like it. After all, their world has become big, and they have a lot to compare themselves against. **They want to look the part.**

This can be both good and bad. Especially as they start to ask questions about faith. Their friends might already be baptized. **Are they really ready to make that decision?** Maybe, or maybe they're getting close. Help them connect the dots.

their motivation

You know your child better than anyone, but in this stage, teens are **motivated by acceptance**, even though they might have a hard time finding it. And they **feel a great deal of peer-responsibility**, which is a lot to keep up with.

Preteens may feel pressure to be someone that others want them to be. This is true even for becoming a Christian. **Maybe they feel ashamed** they are falling behind others their age. Your role is to nudge and adjust them. You may think your preteen too immature to be baptized, and they may be. Try not to slam the door shut. It may be years before they try to open it again. Yes, **you want to make sure they are ready**, but they also need know they're **moving in the right direction.**

Match their motivations by affirming their curiosity and decision making.

study with them

Be ready to guide them in Scripture when they ask for it. Help them see why we get baptized.

what's the problem? sin.
Isa 59:1-4 & Rom 5:23

why is it a problem? selfishness.
James 1:9-15 & 2 Tim 3:1-5

how do we respond? believe, confess, repent, & be baptized.
Acts 2:37-40

why should we do that?
James 1:16-18 & John 14:1-4

If it seems like they've got this down, prompt them:

what do you want to know before you take the next step?

making conversation

Preteens might seem to be **acting without thinking**. They are capable, though, of complex ideas.

Help them verbalize it with low risk casual conversation. Try things like...

When they attend a class or a devotional: What is something you want to remember from that?

When your student shares that someone did something wrong: What could they have done instead?

When someone they know gets baptized: Is that something that you think we need to do?

When your church is engaged in a service activity: Is there something we could do to get involved?

When they seem like they are impulsive: Is that something we can pray about together?

When they seem indifferent: Is there something you want to talk about?

They might not talk much, nor even remember the conversation. **They will, however, remember you cared enough to ask.**

coaching tips

Your preteen wants so badly to be older than they are. Find ways to celebrate obedience, curiosity, and spiritual growth.

Your preteen is asking a lot of questions (sometimes not out loud). Be a safe space to talk about sin. Model how faith, repentance, and baptism fit together.

Your preteen wants to know people value them. Show the importance of belonging and contributing to the Church. Help them find ways that they can do this on their own.

this all might sound like a lot, but I can assure you... *God's got this.*