

Baptism Interviews

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The following questions and notes reflect my approach to interviewing candidates for baptism. It combines questions that I ask adults with questions I often ask children. I find most of the questions helpful in getting to know both children and adults.

I originally created this document as a training tool for other leaders doing interviews. More recently, I started sharing it with parents. It was not my intention that this be used as a “cheat-sheet for the quiz.” My purpose was to give parents an idea of the kind of things I would hope their children would understand before they are baptized.

The questions are in blue text. Notes are in black.

Interview

How long have you been thinking about being baptized? How did you come to this decision?

Let's talk about Jesus. Tell me about him. Who is he?

Often, people will define Jesus in terms of what he can do for them. That's good. But I wonder if this person knows that Jesus was God and was with God in the beginning. I wonder if he knows that Jesus was God in the flesh. I wonder if she knows what it means that Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah. (It means that he was the savior promised by the prophets.)

Do you ever sin?

(This question is mostly for younger children.)

Do you remember when you first asked Jesus to come into your life and to take away your sins?

What can you tell me about that decision?

Why do you want to be baptized?

Good answers include...

- Because Jesus told us to
- To follow Jesus' example
- To wash away my sins

If the person can't say why they want to be baptized, they might not be ready.

We have a paper about baptism. It includes some Scriptures. Have you seen it? Did you read it?

Did you talk it over with anyone?

Maybe we could review it together.

Do you have any questions about it?

Suppose you were to die suddenly. Would you go to heaven?

Most people say, “Yes.” If they say “no,” I want to know why. Some people say “no” because they believe baptism is essential for salvation. If that's the case, I do not argue with them. I just encourage obedience.

If the candidate says “Yes,” I want to know why. It is important to discover the basis of a person's confidence before God.

How can you be sure that you are going to heaven? Suppose someone stopped you as you were about to enter heaven and asked, “Why should I let you in?” What would you say?

Often, people will say something like, “I've asked God to forgive my sins.” This is true, but it does not reveal whether the candidate understands that their right standing with God is dependent upon Jesus' atoning death. Similarly, someone might say, “I'm trusting Jesus.” This is very good. But I want to know if the person understands the basics of atonement or redemption. I want to hear the candidate say something like, “Jesus died in my place” or “Jesus suffered for my sins on the cross.” It may take some further probing to learn what relationship the candidate sees between Christ's death and his own relationship with God.

Are you planning to live for Jesus for the rest of your life?

Do you think you can make that decision now, even though you will probably experience things in the future that you didn't expect? What if later you face choices that you didn't anticipate? Will your plan still be to do whatever Jesus wants you to do?

This question is mostly for kids. I want to affirm their ability to make a decision for life.

How can we know what Jesus wants us to do?

There are a variety of good answers here. I want to hear the candidate mention the Bible.

Do you think you will ever sin after you are baptized?

What will you do then?

What is your plan for staying close to Jesus after your baptism?

Among other things, I am interested in what kind of relationship the candidate has with the church or wants to have with the church.

I would like to see you meet with someone every week for couple months to pray and to talk about how you can keep growing. How does that sound to you?

I ask adults this question in the hope of getting a mentor to go through a study of Foundations for Christian Living. I would not commonly use this question with children.

Other Things to Talk About

Coordinate details:

Which meeting on what day?

Who will perform the baptism?

Talk about the need for a video interview.

Try to get it scheduled.

- Tell the candidate how to enter the baptistery, where to sit, and how to hold her hands.

I encourage the candidate to hold her nose with her left hand and to hold her left wrist with her right hand. I will commonly do a "dry run" using a chair.

- Where to go and what to do after the baptism
- Bring a towel and a change of clothes.
- What to wear?

Don't wear anything too thin or very light in color. Avoid sweats or anything that will be very heavy when wet. Khaki shorts and a t-shirt would be a good choice.

Video Interview

Sample Questions

"My name is _____. I'm going to be baptized today."

You might get kids to talk about...

How old they are

What grade they are in school

Things they enjoy doing

Get them to say things beginning with phrases like...

I want to be baptized because...

I've known about God since...

Those who have known me for a long time know that I...

I need a savior because...

There has been a big change in my life recently.

Finally something like this

Jesus is... (God's Son, my Lord, my Savior)

I want to follow Jesus forever