



## Requesting Baptism for Children in Covenant Life Church

We value children greatly in Covenant Life Church. We put a great deal of energy into being a place where children learn the facts about the Bible, know the reality of God through the leaders and volunteers, and experience the love of Jesus through His Church.



The background to our care for children goes back to our understanding of the Biblical concept of covenant. When we read through the Bible we find that God relates to us in terms of a covenant, a binding agreement together. God comes to Abraham in Genesis 12 and says,

***I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will  
curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (vss 2, 3)***

And then God gave him a sign that would set Abraham's descendants apart from the others as a special people, a special nation. That sign was circumcision (Genesis 17:10).

This special relationship that God had with Abraham meant that God would bless him and his descendants, would protect them, and would eventually bring a Messiah to the earth that would provide salvation for every nation. Abraham and his descendants had a part in this covenant, too. He and his descendants were to "Walk before me faithfully and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1)

In the New Testament the covenant language is used, only there is an indication that instead of circumcision, the sign of being in this special relationship with God is baptism. Paul writes of this to a church in a city named Colossae. Some believers came to the Christians in that city and said that they weren't really Christian unless they were circumcised and committed to carrying out all the laws of the Old Testament Jews. Paul says, in response:

***In him (Jesus) you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.***

What Paul is saying here is that they don't need to be circumcised. They have an identity with Jesus that came with their baptism. And so, we understand that the New Testament sign of the covenant, that special relationship with God, is baptism.

Since they had children as part of the Covenant in the Old Testament, we include them today as well.

## **Requesting Baptism for Children in Covenant Life Church** *Continued*

Having said all of that, we do have to say that there is a common understanding of baptism that we do not adhere to:

**Baptism does not mean that these children are automatically guaranteed heaven. We believe that through the nurture and training provided by parents and the church they will come to believe, but it is not automatic, just as in the Old Testament period people could be covenant breakers. Rather, we look forward to a time when they will become keepers of the covenant themselves. For us, this is what we call Profession of Faith.**

Baptism for us, then, is a very special time. At this time we celebrate the following promises:

**God's promise to be in a special relationship with this child or adult.  
In the baptism of children we refer to it as God's special mark on this child.;**

**The parents' promise to faithfully teach this child to live in a relationship with God;**

**And the congregation's promise to be an assist to parents in the process of rejoicing in and celebrating the spiritual growth of children.**

With all of that as background, we're glad that you are considering baptism for your child. Here are guidelines for you as you think about requesting baptism for your child at Covenant Life Church.

- 1. Since this is a celebration of the covenant, God's special relationship with His people, we reserve this sacrament for members of Covenant Life. This is important to us, since the congregation makes a promise to assist you in the growth and spiritual development of your child. We will proceed with baptism if you are in the process of membership, either attending or planning to attend one of our new member classes.**
- 2. Since we make promises to one another for the spiritual care and education of our kids, we ask that each family participate at some level in our Children's or Youth Ministry. Lyn VanTol, our Director of Family Ministries has a wide variety of places for parents and families to serve.**