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CLASSROOM

Helping a Child Understand Baptism

Written by Susan Pisarra

Sierra announced excitedly, “I want to be baptized!” I asked her, “Why?” and she told me that she wanted to have her sins washed away.

Many children (and adults) do not understand the purpose of baptism. Whenever I have the opportunity to share the Gospel with a child, I want her to know the difference between becoming a Christian and being baptized. One method I have found helpful is using my hands to teach the purpose of baptism. Children “get it” and remember it easily. An extra benefit, however, is that parents who may harbor wrong understandings also “get it.” Some may even rethink their own salvation and baptism experiences.

Assuming the child has made her decision to become a Christian, help him or her understand baptism:

1. *Hold one forearm up, palm facing out, and support it with your other hand at the elbow. Say, “People who did not believe that Jesus is God punished him by nailing him to a cross. Let’s think of my arm as Jesus on the cross” (or you may ask the child what happened to Jesus).*
2. *Let your uplifted hand go limp and fall forward. Say, “Jesus died on the cross for us.”*
3. *Extend your uplifted forearm down to a horizontal position. Say, “Jesus’ body was buried in a tomb in the ground” (or you may ask what happened next).*
4. *Return your forearm to the upright position. Say, “On the third day, Jesus arose from the dead and lives today!” (Or ask what happened next.)*
5. *Now substitute the child’s name instead of Jesus. Say, “Sierra, now let’s think of you standing in the baptism water. **You will use your body to make a picture of what Jesus did for you.** It is the first way to be a witness to others about becoming a Christian.” Repeat the process, saying, “You stand up in the water, you go under the water, and you come back up out of the water.” Invite the child (and parents) to do it with you,.*

Nearly always, this becomes the “ah-ha” moment! And all who have seen it want to practice it to remember and share with others.

