

# Contents

Introduction .....	4
Step 1: Preparing the Student .....	11
Step 2: Understanding the Gospel .....	17
Step 3: Assurance of Salvation.....	27
Step 4: Affirmation of Faith .....	33
Step 5: The Meaning of Baptism .....	37
Step 6: Preparing a Testimony .....	42
The Ordinance of Baptism .....	46
When Should a Young Person Be Baptized?.....	46
Appendix I—Two Views on Childhood Participation in Church Ordinances.....	47
Appendix II—Concerning the Age of Baptism for Children: Reasons for Waiting .....	56
Appendix III—What Can Give a Believer Genuine Assurance?.....	58
Recommended Resources.....	65
About Truth78.....	67

# Introduction

This guide has roots in three realms of my experience. The first realm was as a boy growing up in a Christian home with godly parents who showed me the way that leads to life (Matthew 7:14). At age seven, I raised my hand to “accept Christ” in a Sunday school class that my mother taught. I have a vague memory of that moment, but no idea what I was thinking or feeling. When we got home that afternoon, she recorded the date in the back of my Bible, marking me as the last of her four children to be saved. It also marked the first of several times while growing up that I “made a decision” or “rededicated my life to the Lord”—never quite sure if I was truly born again. I knew that I was a sinner. I believed that Jesus died for my sins. And I knew that by accepting Jesus “into my heart” I would have eternal life. Looking back, I had a shallow understanding of the gospel and limited confidence in my “decision” to follow Christ. Consequently, I struggled with assurance of salvation for the first two decades of my life.

The second realm was my experience as a father of two daughters. In 1993, my oldest was in sixth grade, and she expressed a desire to be baptized. I was delighted by her interest, but not sure if she was ready. I invited her to a special “daddy-daughter” time to discuss it. We met once a week for seven weeks and reviewed the basics of the Christian faith, baptism, and church membership. She took these sessions seriously, and we were both surprised by how much we enjoyed them. By the time we finished, I was more confident that my daughter was ready for baptism. We also discovered that the time spent in these heartfelt discussions about eternal realities drew us closer as father and daughter, reinforcing a special spiritual bond between us that we both will cherish and benefit from for a lifetime.

Three years later, I was the Pastor for Parenting and Children’s Discipleship in my church. In that role, I had the opportunity to influence the way we prepared young people for baptism. I prepared the first edition of this booklet for use by the church

and parents as a baptism preparation tool. More importantly, I designed it as a tool that might be used to better discern a young person's understanding of the gospel and where he might be in his spiritual development. Part of my aim in providing this tool is to assist the church in its efforts to faithfully oversee the ordinance of baptism, while preserving and reinforcing the responsibility, privilege, and blessing that belongs to parents to prepare their children to take this important step of obedience and faith.

I have further revised the original material in the hope that it will continue to be useful for baptism preparation, but I also hope it can benefit young people who have already been baptized. I grew up in a church that saw no need for a guide to prepare young people for baptism because, in their view, I had already been baptized when I was three months old. Still, if given the opportunity, I am sure my dad would have welcomed a guide like this and the encouragement to meet with his children to explore their understanding of the truth of the gospel and the state of their souls. I, in turn, would have welcomed the opportunity to discuss these things with my dad. I would have been blessed by those discussions, and I probably would have been spared a lot of confusion and spiritual insecurity.