

Priesthood Study Series
Study #12 - Blessing of Infants & Young Children

Moroni 8 — Remarks concerning infant baptism

- ♦ Little children are whole, for they **are not capable of committing sin** It is a solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children. (9)
Behold I say unto you, that this thing shall ye teach, repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea teach **Little children need no repentance, neither baptism.** (11)
Little children cannot repent. (20) And **he that saith that little children need baptism, denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of Him and the power of His redemption.** (21)

Doctrine & Covenants

- ♦ Little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through Mine Only Begotten; therefore they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they become accountable before Me. (28:13a)
- ♦ No one can be received into the church of Christ **unless he has arrive unto the years of accountability before God, and is capable of repentance.** (17:20)
- ♦ You must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; for all men must repent and be baptized, and not only men, but women; and children who have arrived to the years of accountability. (16:6d)
- ♦ Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning, and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again in their infant state, innocent before God (90:6b)

Inspired Version of the Bible

- ♦ That thou mayest know forever that children are not accountable to until they are eight years old. (Genesis 17:11b)
- ♦ Moreover, your little ones . . . and your children, which in that day (rebellion in the wilderness after being led out of Egypt) had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. (Deut. 1:39) **(These children were still in a state of innocence and not yet accountable before God)**

Instruction to the Church concerning little children

- ♦ Every member of the church of Christ having children, is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name. D&C 17:19
- ♦ The RLDS Department of Statistics has reported that blessings have held steady at a rate of 83.8%. [1927-1959] About **70% of those blessed are later baptized** compared to only 49% of the children not blessed. Overall, when both parents were members of the church, 45.2% of their children were blessed. When only the father was a member: 14.3%, and when only the mother: 32.6%. Non-member blessings accounted for 7.9%.

General Conference Resolutions

701 Adopted April 9, 1913

“That the ordinance of blessing should not be administered to children who are old enough to be baptized.” Prior to this time there was recognized age limit above which a child should not be entitled to the ordinance of blessing. *General Conference Minutes*, April 9, 1913, page 1707.

522 Adopted April 15, 1904

“Resolved, That in the sense of this quorum [First Seventy] that children under eight years of age are not eligible for baptism in the church.”

Jesus blessed little children & infants

- ◆ But Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid hands on them, and departed thence. Matt. 19:14-15
- ◆ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and the disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw and heard them, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, and put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Mark 10:11-14
- ◆ They brought unto him also, infants, that he might touch them; but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Luke 18:15-16
- ◆ And it came to pass that **He commanded** that their little children should be brought. When he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bear record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. 3 Nephi 8:12, 23
- ◆ When he had done this he wept again, and he spake unto the multitude, and saith unto them, Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold, they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were, in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about; And they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them, and the multitude did see and hear, and bear record; and they know that their record is true, for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; 3 Nephi 8:24-26

When should children be blessed?

- ◆ Normally the children of members of the church are brought for blessing some time during the first six months after birth.
- ◆ It is not unusual, however for older children to be blessed. This happens (1) if the parents join the church when the child is past infancy or (2) if circumstances (such as living far away from a congregation of the church) are such that a child is not blessed earlier.
(Source: *Sacraments within the RLDS tradition*, Peter Judd)

Membership in the church of Jesus Christ not required of Parents requesting the blessing of their children

- ◆ Blessing does not require that the parents be members of the church.
- ◆ It is usual, however. For the parents to be instructed in the significance of the ordinance before the child is blessed. (Source: *Sacraments within the RLDS tradition*, Peter Judd)

“Witnessing through the Sacramental Ordinances” Pages 25-26

- ◆ The effectiveness of the ordinance depends in a great measure on the sense of the covenant into which the participating parties enter. Since the infant is mentally incapable of consciously entering a covenant, he (she) is the object of the covenant rather than one of the principles.
- ◆ The covenanting persons are God (represented through the priesthood), the parents and the church. They pledge together the wise and abundant use of their resources to aid the child in his mental, physical, and spiritual development.
- ◆ There are many occasions when the various ordinances are abused, but probably none so frequently as that of child blessing.
- ◆ It is sometimes inserted into a preaching service, prayer service, or other service without the slightest preparation of either congregation or parents for the ordinance, and with no follow-up either in the service or afterward.
- ◆ Plans should be worked out by the priesthood and parents for a service set for a definite time, with home discussions, perhaps also with classes at the church to promote an understanding of the essential spiritual values of the ordinance. The ordinance itself should be performed in a service planned for that purpose.

Ordinances & Sacraments of the Church - Yale & Brockway, pages 143-146

- ◆ Parents should be seated in the congregation near an aisle so there will be ease in moving forward at the appropriate time. It is preferred that they be located fairly near the front.
- ◆ It is suggested that an infant should be fed shortly before the service begins and all other precautions taken so he (she) will be comfortable. This will help prevent restlessness and crying during the blessing.
- ◆ One of the parents should be instructed to carry the child to the altar with its head to the parent's right so that the transfer to arms of the assisting elder will place the head nearest his heart.
- ◆ Where a child is too large to be held, it may be seated on a chair or on the lap of one of the parents, in which case the elders should lay their hands upon its head to pronounce the blessing.
- ◆ Only members of the Melchisedec Priesthood may officiate.
- ◆ It is preferable that there be two of them but, in case of emergency where there is only one available, it is permissible for one to do so.
- ◆ The function of the assisting elder is to console and child quiet, presenting it in such a manner that the officiating (spokesman) elder may place his hands upon the child. The assisting elder should be careful to hold the child securely (not tightly), close to him rather than in extended arms. He should see that the child's head is slightly raised and facing the congregation.

Joseph Smith, III

“The blessing by the laying on of hands, while it does not confer membership in the church, places them under the special watch-care of the spiritual forces attendant upon the children of the covenant, and undoubtedly does convey power by which they may be led into such ways of life and thought that will more readily receive the truth when of proper age.”

(Source: *The Saints Herald*, Vol. 33, page 418, July 10, 1886)

Points generally covered in the Prayer

- ◆ Address and approach God.
- ◆ Acknowledgement of priesthood authority.
- ◆ Acceptance of the child at the altar of God.
- ◆ It is desirable but not imperative that the elder use the name of the child in the prayer of blessing.
- ◆ Recognition of the good desires of the parents.
- ◆ Thanksgiving for the sacrament.
- ◆ Invocation of the blessing.
- ◆ Request for physical protection.
- ◆ Request for rich spiritual expression.
- ◆ Request for direction of parents that they may provide for the physical and physically needs of the child.
- ◆ Invocation of a blessing on the home, church, and family for the good of the child.

Fred L. Young [Series on Ordinances of the Church, #2 of 8]

- ◆ To offer an intercessory prayer for the blessing of a child is a great privilege and responsibility which no one should take lightly because the more nearly the prayer conforms to the desires of God, the greater effect it will have for good.

As we increase in our awareness of the lasting values of this sacrament in the lives of those who are the object of it, the natural result is a struggle to draw closer to the mind and will of God, so that our prayers will result in a more adequate blessing for each child.

In all such prayers, the personality and the background of the minister offering the prayer will have a great bearing on the nature of the prayer. The question is often asked, is it absolutely necessary to say, May his (her) name be recorded in the Lamb's book of life?"The answer is no. This statement has become traditional and has been used in a context foreign to the original intent.

The recording of the name of a person in the Lamb's book of life is not something that happens because of a request, but as a result of the grace of God and of a person making and living by his covenant with God. An elder's prayer to have the name thus recorded is not the governing factor.

Follow-up

It is the responsibility of the officiating elder to see that a statistical report of the blessing is prepared and that a Certificate of Blessing be prepared for the parents of the child blessed and presented to them as soon as possible.