

## Frequently Asked Questions About

# BAPTISM

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## Healing Waters

Baptism is one of the most precious and important aspects of the Christian life, therefore this may be one of the most rewarding studies of your life! For more than two thousand years, followers of Christ have willingly and faithfully participated in baptism—a one time personal response of devotion to God.

Unfortunately there is some confusion among people of faith about baptism. This study is designed to offer clear and straightforward answers about some of the most commonly asked questions people have about Christian baptism.

This study is based on one question: What does the Bible teach about baptism? Therefore, many of the scriptures are printed out for you to read. Some scriptures are simply referenced by book, chapter, and verse. We encourage you to read them all.

Please contact our church office at any time to set up an individual study with one of our ministers or elders. We would love to help you in any area of your Christian walk!

### What is Baptism?

Baptism is a vivid reminder that you have departed from an old life and begun a new life in Christ. It is a tangible reminder of a point in time when a commitment to follow Christ happened and a transition from old to new took place.

*"We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may have new life." Romans 6:4*



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## What if I Still Have Questions?

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If you have more questions about baptism, we would love to study with you individually!

After baptism, we all continue to grow in our knowledge of God and His Word. None of us are perfect. We all need forgiveness. Baptism is just the beginning of our wonderful new life in Christ!

## What is the significance of baptism?

Baptism is not just a physical act. It is not just something we do. It is an act filled with deep spiritual meaning and reality. Consider these spiritual realities that baptism so vividly pictures:

It is a picture of Christ's burial and resurrection.

*"Christ died for our sins. . .He was buried. . .and He rose again."*

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

It is a picture of the cleansing of sin.

In Acts 2:38, when Peter was asked by the people what they should do to be saved, he replied, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

In Acts 22:16, Ananias instructed Saul to *"Get up, be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

It is a picture of my new life as a Christian.

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* 2 Corinthians 5:17

## Why should I be baptized?

Because Christ commands it.

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:19-20

Because obeying Christ shows you know Him.

*"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."* 1 John 2:3-4, 6

Because it is the appeal we make to God for a clean start.

*"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* 1 Peter 3:21-22 (NASB)



Because it unites you with Christ in a special way.

*“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:26-27* It has been said that in baptism we put on Christ. In a sense, our baptism is a full embrace of Christ and His forgiveness and leadership over our lives.

Because you desire to be forgiven.

*“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:16*

### *Who should be baptized?*

Every person who has believed in Christ. According to the scriptures, those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross to save us from our sins should be baptized. Once a person believes in Jesus, repents of their sin, and commits to live for Christ, baptism is the next step. Repent means to “turn the mind”. It’s making a U-turn in the way we think and live. Instead of living to please ourselves, we are committing to live to please God. Look at these examples from the book of Acts, a book in the bible that tells the history of the early church.

*“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Acts 2:41*

*“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8:12*

*“Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.” Acts 8:13*

*“As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.” Acts 8:36-38 (NASB)*

### **How Should I Be Baptized?**

The Greek word for baptism is “baptizo” and it literally means to “immerse, dip under, submerge”. For the first 1200 years of Christian history, immersion was the universally accepted mode of baptism. Every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion as seen in the above scriptures.



### *Is the form of baptism important?*

Many people find it difficult to believe the prescribed form or way of being baptized is important to God. They would say outward symbols are irrelevant to God and He is only interested in our hearts. It

is true that God is most concerned about our heart condition, but He often uses prescribed forms to test or demonstrate the sincerity of our hearts—our faith, trust, loyalty, and obedience. In the Old Testament, cases are recorded where people ignored the form of sacrifice and offered animals forbidden by law or had the form right but their hearts were all wrong. (I Samuel 15, Malachi 1:6-10, Amos 5:21-25).

The New Testament shows these same truths in Jesus' harsh indictment of the Pharisees.

*“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.” And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” Mark 7:8-9, 13*

May it never be said that Jesus could make this statement of us because we have chosen to obey those traditions we are comfortable with and disregard the forms that don't suit us. Baptism by immersion may be different from our past traditions, be inconvenient, or even humbling; but if our Lord prescribed it in a certain form, we should submit to His clear instruction to us.

### *If God knows my heart, isn't that enough?*

The two cannot be neatly separated. For example, the physical act of disobedience brought about a spiritual result in the Garden of Eden (Genesis chapters 1-3). In addition, the physical birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus brings the greatest spiritual gift to us: salvation. We should not be surprised that a spiritual decision to accept Christ by faith is linked with a physical response like baptism.

### *What if I was sprinkled as a child?*

First, you should be grateful you had parents who cared about you to set you apart for God. Because of their devotion, you now have an opportunity to complete their prayer by willingly submitting to Christ in His call to be immersed.

Second, being immersed is not a sign of disrespect for what your parents did, nor is it an act of condemnation against them. Be thankful for the heritage of concerned parents, but don't be negligent of your responsibility as an adult to make your personal commitment and obedience to God in baptism.

Many who are now members of this congregation were sprinkled as infants and then, when seeing what the bible said about adult baptism through immersion, were baptized into Christ. God has led you to this point and we pray you will take the next step soon.

### **What About Children and Babies?**

Since baptism is for those who have believed and repented, we do not practice infant baptism. An infant cannot believe. An infant cannot repent. Therefore, we do not practice infant baptism.

### *Can a child be baptized?*

Yes! However, keep in mind that baptism is appropriate for those who have made a personal decision to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Every child matures emotionally and spiritually at a different rate. There is no right or wrong age for a child to be baptized. We just want to make sure they are mature enough to place their faith in Jesus and understand the true meaning of baptism. We have some helpful resources to assist parents in ensuring their child is ready to respond to Christ in baptism. We also are willing to talk with you and your child to help them understand this life changing decision.

### *Can babies be dedicated?*

While we do not baptize infants since that is not what is found in the scriptures, there is nothing in the bible that speaks against “dedicating our children to the Lord”. This is really more of an opportunity for parents to dedicate themselves to the rearing of their children in the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 tells parents to bring their children up “in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Dedication of a baby is a commitment of parents to raise the child in a godly fashion, not a child’s personal decision of faith. Our ministers and elders are happy to pray over new parents and their baby—to thank God for the blessing of the child and ask for His guidance in raising the child to know Christ.

### *What happens to children if they die before they are old enough to make a decision about being baptized?*

We believe these children will be received into the eternal presence of Christ. The bible teaches that eternal condemnation comes to those who have willfully sinned. No infant is capable of ignoring God’s truth. A young child cannot understand what God has revealed and then reject that truth. Upon the event of their tragic death, children will be received into the presence of God.

## **What Does Baptism Have to Do with Salvation?**

Perhaps you were never taught to be baptized. Maybe you’ve never been challenged to consider the issue. If this is the case, we urge you to give thought to what God says about baptism. This does not negate your faith up to this point. God has led you to where you are today. Part of growing in our knowledge of Christ is an openness to understand and be obedient to new areas we discover in His word. Baptism is an opportunity to humble yourself and receive God’s gift of grace and mercy.

### *Does the act of baptism itself save a person?*

No. Scripture is abundantly clear that only Jesus saves. Act 4:12 says, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*” The work of salvation is a finished work by Christ on the cross. Baptism has no redemptive powers of its own. There is nothing special about the water in the river, pond, or baptistry. If baptism itself could save, the cross of Jesus would have no real meaning. “*...and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*”

*I Peter 3:21-22*

### *Should a person ever be re-baptized?*

Baptism is a one time personal faith response to God's offer of salvation. Re-baptism is only encouraged for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism because they don't remember it, they were coerced into it, or their heart was not right at the time.

### *What if a person is not baptized—can he or she be saved?*

After Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, the pattern and teaching we see in the New Testament is clear: after hearing the message of Jesus, people put their faith in Jesus, repented of their sin, and were baptized. Each time they responded without questioning the necessity of baptism. While the ultimate answer to the above question must be left up to God, consider this question: Why not be baptized when God was clear that we should?

### **What Should I Do Next?**

As soon as you have believed that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world, the next step is to repent of your sin. This means to make the commitment to live your life for God and His ways instead of your own way or the way the world thinks and acts. As a baptized disciple of Christ, you will have a lifetime to continue learning and you will also have the Holy Spirit to help you grow and become more of what God intends for you to be!

*“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**’” Acts 2:38*

*“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” I Corinthians 6:18-20*

### *When should I be baptized?*

As soon as you understand the meaning of baptism! In the New Testament there was a sense of urgency about baptism. Baptism is not an optional ritual to be delayed or postponed. Jesus commanded that His followers be baptized and He never indicated they should wait until it was more convenient. When you decide to be baptized, you can contact us and we will meet you at any time of the day to baptize you! Although you are welcome to come forward on a Sunday, you do not need to wait until a Sunday or certain “Baptism Day”. The opportunity to be baptized is always open.

*“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Acts 2:41*

*“At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.” Acts 16:33*

*“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.” Acts 22:16*

### *What should I wear?*

Private areas for changing will be provided. We have baptismal garments for you to wear, but you may want to bring a t-shirt and shorts to wear underneath.

### *Will I have to say anything?*

Yes. You will be asked to make your public confession of Christ and express your desire to follow Him. This can be done in your own words or simply by answering the question, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and He died on the cross to save you from your sin and He is your Lord and Savior?”

*“...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (NASB)*

### *Does this make me a member of the church?*

The church is the Body of Christ. When you are baptized into Christ, you become a member of the Body of Christ because you are now “in Christ.” No human can make you a member of the church because it is the Lord who adds you to His church. Being baptized is the beginning of a lifelong journey of walking with Jesus—something we are all doing together as the church! As disciples (followers) of Christ, we all work together to help others know of the wonderful salvation found in Jesus!

*“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47*

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20*



After reading this study—if you have any questions and would like to study more, or if you desire to be baptized, please contact our Family Life Minister, Randy Schilling at 217-778-8859 or berean82@gmail.com.