



WATER

Baptism

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WATER BAPTISM

You've decided to follow Jesus. Somehow, because of a strategy that is both baffling and divine, his message of hope and everlasting life found you and compelled you to respond. This newfound closeness you have with the Maker of the universe will soon take on a whole new dimension of significance as you begin to fathom the incomprehensible: he gave his life so that you could live. Let the journey begin.

Jesus made it very clear that one of the first steps in following Him is to be water baptized. He told His followers in *Matthew 28:19*, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit." A disciple is someone who follows Jesus and believes he is the only Son of God who was crucified on a cross—thereby making a way for sinners to be forgiven from the wages of their sin (death)—walked out of his grave three days later and ascended to heaven. If you're following Jesus and believe these things, you are a disciple.

He stressed the importance of water baptism, saying, "Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved..." (*Mark 16:16*). Water baptism, then, is very important for any disciple of Jesus. Like you.

Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, obey my commandments."

These simple words are the foundation for a healthy, life-long relationship with Jesus.

Water baptism is both personal recognition and public confirmation that Jesus died on the cross to eliminate your sinful nature.

"For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was" (Romans 6:4-5).

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Just like Jesus was buried in a tomb and came back to life, water baptism represents the death and burial of the sin in your life and your rebirth as a Christian. It's a physical indication of what has already taken place in your heart.

A Holy Defiance

Water baptism signifies a holy defiance over the sinful nature that once controlled you. It symbolizes the new godly nature you received liberally at the very moment you decided to follow Jesus.

A New Identity

Water baptism indicates that you identify with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It means you're recognizing the astonishing significance of Jesus, the perfect and sinless Son of God paying for the wrongs of the world by being put to death on a cross and buried in the ground, and yet, rising from the dead three days later. It means you recognize that, because of the price that was paid for your eternal life, you've become a new person with a new life.

A Change of Heart

In the Old Testament (before Jesus came to earth), worship and obedience to God was made evident by outwardly visible virtues such as burnt offerings and circumcision. Because Jesus paid the price for the forgiveness of sins and made a way for mankind to walk with God, New Testament evidences of following God are the internal virtues that affect the human heart such as the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (*Gal. 5:22*) to name a few. Since you cannot show someone your heart or how it is affected by these internal virtues, water baptism serves as the outward expression that your heart has been changed and deeply affected by this newfound closeness you have with God. It illustrates a discarding of your old sinful heart in exchange for a new heart restored by Jesus' love.

A Desire to Obey

When you willingly respond and make this step it's proof that you want to follow and obey Jesus, an outward expression of what you've decided in your heart.

*"When you came to Christ, you were 'circumcised,' but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the cutting away your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead" (*Colossians 2:11-12*).*

Without having experienced the transformation of accepting Jesus gift of forgiveness and eternal life (through repentance and faith), you will miss the true purpose of water baptism and will be merely observing a formality that has no eternal meaning to you.

Jesus said, "With my authority, take this message of repentance to all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem: there is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me" (Luke 24:47).

The Apostle Peter said, "...Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and by baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

In order for baptism to have significant spiritual meaning in your life, you should have already experienced the full transformation of deciding to follow Jesus by repenting of your sins, having faith (acknowledging your belief) that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God, and wanting to obey him no matter what.

Repenting of Sins

Repentance doesn't mean you feel sorry or convicted of your sin (although these things will probably happen when you sin). Instead, repentance means you reject your sin; it involves turning from sin and asking God to forgive you and wash your sins away.

Jesus said, "...there is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me." Repenting of sins, then, is part of following Jesus.

Having Faith

Faith in Jesus Christ is what defines a Christian. To have faith in him is to solidly believe—to have a deep sense of conviction—that he is the

Messiah, the Son of God who came to redeem (rescue) the world from sin and death. Faith, then, is what makes us aware of God's promises of hope and happiness on earth, and eternal life with God in heaven.

WHERE SHOULD I BE WATER BAPTIZED?

Baptisms can take place in a baptismal (a special water tank designed for baptisms), a river or lake, a swimming pool or even a hot tub!

Regardless of the location, keep in mind that your baptism is a very exciting, special event and should

include your church family. In most cases, your local church

leadership will be involved in the baptism, but Scripture does not clearly require that church leaders conduct the baptism.

"And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

"But now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

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“...Since we have
died to sin, how can
we continue to live
it?” (Romans 6:2)

WHEN SHOULD I BE WATER BAPTIZED?

If you're ready now, why not make plans to be baptized right away? Talk with another Christian or a church leader, and ask them to explain the biblical significance of water baptism until you completely understand its purpose and benefits.

WHY SHOULD I BE WATER BAPTIZED?

Water baptism is a step of obedience, commitment and proclamation.

Baptism Established by Jesus

You should be baptized because Jesus told his followers to do so. In fact, Jesus himself was baptized.

Baptism Throughout the Ages

The apostles of Jesus' day recognized this important act of obedience, and baptism has continued to be a significant part of every believer's life since that time.

HOW SHOULD I BE WATER BAPTIZED?

Various Christian groups often differ in their understanding of baptism methods. Many disagree on whether baptism should take place by full immersion, pouring, or sprinkling.

However, the original word for baptism used by early church fathers and New Testament writers was baptize, which means “immersion” or “to cover wholly with fluid.” Therefore, the New Testament understanding of baptism was

“complete
submersion
under
water.”

Scripture repeatedly indicates that we should be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is done just before you are immersed as the person performing the baptism says, “I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is shown throughout the Book of Acts (see Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5). While there is no specific script or “formula” of words to validate your baptism, it is important to follow the examples in Scripture as closely as possible.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WATER BAPTISM:

What if I was baptized before?

This depends on whether you were a Christian at the time of the baptism. If you were a Christian, there is no reason to be baptized again unless you want to be baptized again after not having lived as a Christian for a long season. If you were baptized before you became a Christian, you should be water baptized again.

What about sprinkling?

The biblical definition of baptism shows that total immersion was the mode of water baptism instituted by Jesus.

Sprinkling has become a “tradition” in many churches, but it doesn’t accurately reflect what Jesus told his followers to do.

What about infant baptism?

No instance of infant baptism was ever recorded in the Bible. Because an infant cannot repent and have faith as described in the Bible, there is no benefit to the child who is baptized. It is better for a child to grow and mature until he or she can fully understand the significance of baptism and make an authentic decision to be baptized.

Is water baptism mandatory?

The thief who hung on the cross beside Jesus on the day of crucifixion is evidence that salvation is assured without being water baptized. His conversation with Jesus took place as he was dying and, though the man had no chance to be baptized, Jesus promised that he would be in heaven that day. Clearly, however, baptism is a deeply meaningful event in the life of the Christian. Though it isn't mandatory, it is an act of obedience and a very fulfilling event which every believer should experience.

What should I wear?

Usually, people wear shorts or pants and a dark t-shirt when they are baptized. Your church will probably have a recommendation of what you should wear. Be sure to bring your own towel.

Will people cry?

Baptism is a very moving experience for those who are close to you. People may cry tears of joy as you're being baptized. This is normal.

We receive salvation freely by faith and not through our own efforts. However, baptism has a great deal of significance to knowing and following Jesus. We should want to be baptized simply because he has told us to do so and we want to obey him.

Will I cry?

Probably.

How long will I be under water?

Baptism is a quick submersion below the surface of the water. You will probably be asked to plug your own nose and hold onto your wrist, while the person baptizing you also holds onto your wrist and supports your upper back to quickly lift you back out of the water. He or she will be courteous and sensitive to your personal space. If you have a fear of water or some other discomfort, be sure to discuss this with them beforehand.

A STEP OF OBEDIENCE

Clearly, water baptism is a spiritual directive for all who follow Jesus Christ and have activated the elements of faith and repentance in their lives. It's a step of obedience and an outward statement of your inward commitment to Jesus Christ.

If you're committed to Jesus—if you've made up your mind that you're going to follow him throughout your life—baptism is an important step of obedience you should take. It's an enriching and memorable event designed by Jesus especially for those who follow him.





City Bible Church

discover. experience. celebrate.