



The Importance of Baptism

Baptism History

Even before Jesus' time, baptism was practiced among early converts to the Jewish faith. Ceremonial washing with water was symbolic in Judaism, therefore baptism indicated a convert's willingness to wash away one's previous ways and **identify** with new beliefs and a new community.

Baptism was also important in the ministry of a Jewish prophet named John, who emerged about the same time as Jesus. The gospels and other ancient literature tell his fascinating story. John preached a compelling message to the Jewish people, drawing large crowds and creating quite a buzz. He claimed that God was about to do something new and thus people should **repent** of their sins and prepare for God's saving work.

In keeping with this message, John urged the crowds who heard him to be baptized, thereby **symbolizing** their willingness to identify with and embrace his message. As many came forward, John became known as the Baptizer, or John the Baptist. Jesus was even baptized by John. Though he was not repenting of sin, Jesus was aligning himself with John's message and ministry. After all, Jesus himself would be the fulfillment of the message John was preaching.

With this background, it's no wonder that at the end of Jesus' ministry, he told his followers: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, TNIV). In other words, as Jesus' followers took his message of salvation around the world, other people would become disciples, or followers of Christ. When they did, Jesus wanted these new believers to **publicly identify with him**. So by participating in baptism, a new follower of Jesus symbolically aligns himself or herself with new beliefs and a new community.

In fact, the apostle Paul underscored the symbolic picture that being immersed into water communicates. He suggested that baptism represents a person's **identification** with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-8). When participants lie back or lean forward in the water, it signifies the death of their sinful nature. When they come out of the water, it illustrates their new life in Christ. This tradition has continued down through the centuries with all people who become Christians.

Simply put, baptism is an external sign of an internal change that has taken place in someone's heart. It is not a means of salvation, but a response to salvation. This is why we celebrate baptism – it represents a life changed by God.



Baptism Frequently Asked Questions

What is baptism?

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward change. It's a **public declaration** of how Jesus changed your life. Being baptized shows others that you've decided to follow Jesus, and allows them to celebrate this decision with you. (*Acts 16:31-34*).

Baptism doesn't save a person; it's a symbol and celebration of salvation (*1 Peter 3:21*). The power that brought Jesus back to life is the same power Jesus uses to change our lives – and that's worth getting excited about!

Why should I be baptized?

1. To follow the example set by **Jesus Christ**.

"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Mark 1:9

2. Because Christ **commanded it**.

"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" Matthew 28:19-20

3. It demonstrates that I really am a **Christ-follower**.

"...many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized." Acts 18 18:8

For these reasons – to follow the example of Jesus, to be obedient to Him and because it's a visible demonstration of belief in Jesus Christ – **Baptism is a requirement for membership at Bayside**.

What does the meaning of baptism illustrate?

1. It illustrates Christ's **burial and resurrection**.

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ." Colossians 2:12

"Christ died for our sins . . . He was buried . . . and He rose again." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

2. It illustrates my **new life** as a Christian.

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun." 2 Corinthians 5:17

"By baptism then, we are buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . so also we may live a new life." Romans 6:4



Is baptism necessary for salvation?

Baptism doesn't make you a believer - *it shows that you already believe*. Baptism doesn't "save" you; only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring - it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

Verse to memorize: "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Who should be baptized?

1. **Every person who has *believed* in Christ should be baptized.**

"Those who believed and accepted His messages were baptized." Acts 2:41 (see Acts 8:12)

2. **The one requirement for baptism is *belief in Christ!*** We do not baptize children until they are old enough to believe in Christ and fully understand what that belief means. Baptism is for those who have accepted Christ and made the decision to be baptized (approx. 8 years old).

What is baby dedication?

There's no greater moment when parents sense that *children are a gift from God*. Dedicating a child acknowledges God's sovereignty not only over the child, but also Mom and Dad. Parents present their child before God and His people asking for grace and wisdom in carrying out their responsibilities. Parents also come praying that their child might one-day trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in their life. See our Children's Pastor for more information.

When should I be baptized?

As *soon* as you have believed! There is *no reason* to delay!

"Then Philip began with the Scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?' Philip said 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him." Acts 8:35-38 (see Acts 2:41)

What about being baptized twice?

Our church recommends that you be baptized again *if you have not been baptized by immersion* since you became a believer. It does not devalue a prior experience, but simply reflects your desire to be baptized in the same way Jesus was baptized.



Can my family be baptized together?

Yes! If *each family member* fully understands the meaning of baptism and *each one* has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, families may be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

How are we to be baptized?

1. **We are to be baptized in the same way Jesus was baptized – by being *immersed* in water.**

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water." Matthew 3:16 (see Mark 1:10)

2. **Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion under water.**

". . . then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him." When they came up out of the water . . ." Acts 8:38-39

3. **The word "baptize" from the Greek word "*baptizo*", means "to dip" or "to immerse" under water.**

4. **Due to the limited size of Midtown's baptismal, we baptize you going forward not backward.**

Will I have to say anything?

We do not ask people being baptized to speak, however, we do ask that your brief testimony be included in the baptism registration form. Your baptism is a public profession of your new identification with Jesus Christ and although you may not say one word, your actions will speak louder than any words could!

What happens in the water?

The Pastor will briefly explain the meaning of baptism to the audience. Following, the Pastor will introduce you as you step into the baptismal water. The Pastor will then briefly lower your head, face-forward, under water saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life." (see *Romans 10:9*)

What should I wear when I am baptized?

When being immersed, we advise women to wear shorts and a t-shirt or a t-shirt style dress rather than a swimsuit. Men may wear swimsuits. Remember to bring a change of clothes and a towel.

Special needs?

Our pastoral staff can perform a private baptism in special circumstances. However, we stress the importance of participating in the community celebration and witness that's provided at the congregational baptism services.

Is baptism your next step?

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