

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT BAPTISM?

by Pastor Bob Johnson, Grace Point Church

I. Why is Baptism important?

Baptism is one of the most important practices in the life of a Christ follower. Jesus emphasized the importance of baptism when he told his early followers to ‘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).

The practice of baptism was a pattern of the early church. By the examples of early followers of Christ, we can further see the importance of baptism.

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

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

In Acts 18:8, “Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”

II. What is the meaning of baptism?

1. It is a symbol of Christ’s burial and resurrection.

“Christ died for our sins ...he was buried ...and he rose again.” 1 Corinthians 15:3,34

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

2. It is also a symbol of your 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 our baptism then we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead also we might live a new life.” Romans 6:4

Baptism does not make you a Christian, it is a symbol that pictures what happened when you accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. Baptism is like a wedding ring - it’s the outward symbol of the previous commitment you made in your heart.

“For it is by grace 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

III. WHY DO WE BAPTIZE BY IMMERSION AT GPC?

1. Being immersed in water and not just sprinkled was the way everyone in the Bible was baptized.

The term baptism comes from a Greek word. The verb *baptizo* means 'to cover in water, wash, or dip'.

An example of being immersed in water is in Acts 8. "The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' ... Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him." Acts 8:34-38

2. It is the best way to picture a burial and resurrection.

The early Christian leaders agree ...

Martin Luther ... "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies."

John Calvin ... "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church."

John Wesley... "Buried with Him, alluding to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Every person who has made the decision to believe in Christ.

"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized." Acts 2:41

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News ... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 8:12

"Simon himself believed and was baptized ..." Acts 8:13

The one requirement for baptism is a commit to become a Christ follower. Accordingly, we don't baptize children until they are old enough to understand the impact that sin has on our lives and our need for a Savior.

V. WHEN ARE WE TO BE BAPTIZED?

The examples in Scripture all point to as soon as you have opportunity after you become a Christian.

“Those who believed ... were baptized ... that day!”
(look again at Acts 8:34-38 in Section III)

Acts 2:41

VI. Here are a few more common questions related to baptism:

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 Christian. It doesn't devalue a prior experience but simply reflects your desire to be baptized in the same way Jesus was baptized and in the same way that everyone was baptized in the Bible.

Can my family be baptized together?

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

Will I have to say anything?

Some choose to share about how God has made a difference in their life, others don't. At the beginning of the baptism service, an explanation of the meaning of baptism will be given. After that, those that are waiting to be baptized will be led to the water one at a time. You will be introduced and asked if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. After you say, “Yes”, you will be lowered under the water and brought right back up. Afterwards, you leave the water, dry off, and watch with the others.

Where should baptisms be done?

Any place where there is enough water! A tub of water, rivers, lakes, pools, jacuzzies, or the ocean all work fine.

Typically, the baptisms at Grace Point are in our Kidspoint auditorium using our 'baptistry' (special tub built into our stage area), or using a portable tub of water in our courtyard. Occasionally we have special celebrations at the beach where we let people be baptized there if they wish.

What should I wear when I am baptized?

We encourage women to wear a swim suit with shorts and a top (or a beach cover up) over the swim suit. Men may wear a swim suit and a shirt. Bring a change of clothes, a towel, hair dryer (if desired) and a plastic bag for your wet clothes.

Are pictures allowed?

By all means!!! Baptisms are special events and pictures are helpful to capture the moment. We typically take a picture of each person also and send it to you along with a special baptism certificate.

Can families be baptized at the same time?

Each member of the family will be baptized one person at a time, but families can enter the pool together for a picture.

If I or my child would like to be baptized, what steps do we take?

Children and adults need to attend a class related to salvation to make sure everyone being baptized understands what baptism is and isn't.

Contact one of our staff members here at GPC if you want to attend one of our classes.

How do I find out when the next baptism will be held?

Call our church office at (858) 481-0424, or email us at (hello@gracepointsd.com) or indicate on a Communication Card on Sunday that you are interested in being baptized or you have some more questions.

Baptisms are SPECIAL EVENTS!

Don't be surprised when people clap at your baptism! It is a happy experience for every Christian when someone publicly identifies themselves as a Christ follower by being baptized.