

# Baptism Basics

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When I was a new pastor, Bruce had me helping him with my first baptism. He was let me baptize a couple of folks. I actually practiced "I baptize you...," terrified of making a mistake.

The first person I baptized was a gentleman named Jeff Morris. When it came time for me to baptize him, I gathered up all the confidence I could muster, and in a shaky voice proclaimed "Jim Morrison, I baptize you..."

## MY BAPTISM

I was eight years old when I was baptized. I don't think I really understood what I was doing. I knew I loved Jesus and he lived in my heart. Baptism was a little scary, but I did it because He wanted me to.

As well intentioned as that was, I sometimes wonder if I should have waited a little longer, until I better understood what baptism really means.

Whether baptism is a distant memory, something you are planning to do soon, or something you're avoiding, every one of us can benefit from examining meaning and purpose of baptism.

- Since our next baptism is in two weeks, this seems a good time.

For those being baptized, baptism is a great example of what they are committing themselves to. For those who've been baptized, it's a great reminder of what they committed themselves to.

- It's like wedding vows which mean more to the older couples than the bride and groom.

Baptism shouldn't be a routine or a meaningless ritual. We can help prevent that taking a good look at the basics of baptism.

**Q:** Remember in school learning the five "W's" of journalism?

**A:** Who, What, Where, When, and Why.

## 1. WHO (SHOULD BE BAPTIZED)?

**A:** That's easy: Christians!

Everyone who believes in Jesus and is trying to live in a way that pleases God should be baptized. Apart from a relationship with Jesus, baptism is meaningless. It's just a dip in the pool.

## 2. WHAT (IS BAPTISM)?

**A:** Baptism is a symbol of our repentance and God's salvation.

### SYMBOLS

Baptism is one of two ordinances of the church. That means that is a physical act that symbolizes a spiritual reality. While He was on earth, Jesus gave us only two ordinances.

**Q:** Baptism is one, what is the other?

**A:** Communion

Communion and baptism both take something from ordinary, earthly life – a shared meal and a bath – to demonstrate and symbolize extraordinary, heavenly truths.

It's a mistake to confuse "symbolic" with "not real." Symbolic things can be very real. There's another symbol that we all use on a daily basis and it drives most of our lives.

**Q:** Any guess what that is it?

**A:** Money.

- It symbolizes goods and services, but has no intrinsic value.

On Survivor, they hold an auction with real money. The contestants are happy to pay \$700 for a single cheeseburger, because they can't eat money.

Baptism is "only" a symbol, it does not change us or save us, but it is still a real and powerful reminder of a spiritual reality.

**Q:** What does baptism symbolize?

### 1) REPENTANCE - OUR PART.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. — Acts 2:38 NIV

Baptism is a symbol of our repentance. To repent means to turn away from self-centered ways and turn to God and His ways.

- This isn't a change of behavior; repentance is a change of belief and allegiance that brings a change of behavior.

### 2) SALVATION - GOD'S PART.

Baptism also symbolizes the salvation God give all who believe in Christ. Baptism symbolizes several key aspects of salvation.

## BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

Baptism symbolizes that all believers have died with Christ and are raised to new life with Him.

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 live a new life. – Romans 6:4 NIV

Jesus was our representative in death. Because His death was accepted in payment for our sin, we know that we will also be accepted. And as He was raised to new life, so we will be.

## CHANGE OF ATTIRE

Baptism symbolizes a change of attire. In these next two verses, notice the two actions that accompany baptism:

In [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God.... – Colossians 2:11-12 NIV

...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.  
– Galatians 3:27 NIV

- Baptism symbolizes God removing our sinful nature and giving us Christ's righteousness.

In the early church, they pressed this symbolism by having the participants strip off their old clothing as they went into the water and putting on new clothing as they came out.

- Some traditions are better left behind!

I can summarize the all of this symbolism of baptism this way:

- As we go under the water, we die to our old way of life.
- As we come up from the water, we are raised to our new life.

## WHAT IT'S NOT

*Baptism is not required for salvation* – it's an act of obedience to your Savior.

*Baptism does not cleanse you from your sins* – that was done when Christ died on the cross.

*Baptism is not the same thing as baptism in the Spirit* – baptism in the Spirit is another way of saying the Spirit has filled us.

## 3. WHERE (SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED)?

**A:** Publicly, in water.

Baptism is a public declaration of our repentance and salvation. Throughout history, new believers would suffer persecution or even death for being baptized.

Even in modern times there are places, such as some Muslim or Hindu nations, where new believers are persecuted after they are baptized. There is a real temptation to skip baptism.

Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. — Matthew 10:32 NIV

- Compared to that, our church's baptisms are pretty easy!

Because baptism is public declaration, we encourage those being baptized to say something before they go into the water.

- They may give a joyful testimony of what God has done.
- They may simply declare to the world that Jesus is their Lord.

All they risk a little stage fright. But in turn, these testimonies are a tremendous encouragement to the entire church. Anyone who has attended a baptism will agree.

## **IN WATER**

Various methods of baptism have been used historically, such as sprinkling or pouring water. His Place, like many evangelical churches, submerge in water because it gives a better picture of dying completely to the old self and being raised to new life.

- This isn't always possible; there's room for exceptions.

But situation permitting, immersion gives a better picture of salvation. Additionally, it was also the method used in Jesus' day. Throughout the NT, baptism was done by immersion.

### **4. WHEN (SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED)?**

**A:** When one is able to repent and receive God's salvation.

**Q:** Why doesn't His Place baptize infants?

**A:** Baptism symbolizes repentance, and should be done by those who have repented and received God's salvation.

There is no Biblical age limit, but the person being baptized must be old enough to make that decision for themselves.

### **5. WHY (SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED)?**

**A:** Baptism demonstrates our obedience to Christ and our connection to His Body.

## **OBEDIENCE**

Being baptized is first of all an act of obedience to Jesus:

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 NIV

To be baptized into those names means we are putting ourselves under the control and direction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **CONNECTION**

Baptism also demonstrates our connection to church, the body of Christ across the world.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free.... – 1 Corinthians 12:13 NIV

Baptism connects us to the body of Christ and unifies us, destroying all barriers of race, gender, class, or nationality. All these are washed away in the water, uniting us in Christ.

## **6. WHAT NOW?**

**A:** Get baptized!

1. If you are a believer, but have never been baptized:

- Is it time to respond in obedience and make a public declaration of your repentance and salvation?

2. If you were baptized as an infant, dedicated to God by parents:

- I strongly recommend and ask you to seriously consider being baptized now as a believer, making a personal declaration.

3. If you were baptized as a believer:

- I encourage you to join us at the next baptism, to encourage those being baptized and remember the meaning of your baptism.