

QUESTIONS ABOUT BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

New Life Church
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WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is the time in your life when you publicly identify yourself as a Christ-follower (Acts 8:26-40). This is why we do baptisms in our services and encourage you to bring friends and family with you to watch you get baptized.

Historically baptism signaled an individual's transition from one religion to another and their being washed of former attitudes and deeds. That is why John the Baptist baptized with the baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4).

Baptism doesn't save you. Only God can do that! "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is not a good work by which you gain any grace from God.

Baptism doesn't save anyone, but it is a normal part of someone's initial experience of salvation. It is for this reason that Peter could give such direct instructions, "Repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of sin" (Acts 2:38). Baptism does give you confirmation that you are saved and that you are moving in the right direction (1 Timothy 6:12).

Baptism does to your soul exactly what other acts of faith and obedience do to your soul. Namely, it confirms in your heart that the direction of your life is following Christ. Other acts of faith and obedience have the same effect. The more you trust God the more natural it becomes. The more you obey, the easier it gets.

WHO SHOULD GET BAPTIZED?

Everyone who has trusted Christ as his or her personal savior. As long as you can explain what you have done when you have trusted Christ to save you, you should be baptized.

In fact, baptism is a matter of obedience for believers. Jesus defines his followers as those who have been baptized. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" (Matt. 28:19-20).

HOW DO I GET BAPTIZED?

We baptize by immersion. The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo* and it means "to dip or immerse." It was not translated (the meaning brought across from one language to another) it was transliterated (the letters brought across from Greek to English). Consequently if we talked about the meaning of the word we would be talking about immersion or dunking. It was used for washing hands in a basin. In other words, if it isn't immersion it isn't really baptism.

Immersion better than any other mode of baptism pictures the spiritual reality that

takes place at conversion. Romans 6:3-4. This says that your identification with Christ in baptism displays your having died, been buried, and rising to new life with Christ. It is a vivid rehearsal of his death, burial and resurrection and your partnership with him in it.

When, at conversion we are baptized by the Holy Spirit, we are flooded with His spiritual presence and power. (1 Cor. 12:13) That too is pictured in water baptism. We want to be as close to the biblical picture as possible.

WHY GET BAPTIZED?

As mentioned above there are three reasons:

1. Obedience. Baptism is an act of doing what Jesus wants you to do.
2. Identification. On the outside, baptism identifies you publicly as a Christian, one who follows Christ, and part of the church. On the inside, it identifies you with his death, burial and resurrection.
3. Illustration: Baptism illustrates Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Plan to say something. You will need to tell people what God has done for you through His son. That is what baptism does. It publicly proclaims that God has saved you and changed you. So, no shortcuts here. As stated above, we can make it as easy as possible and it does not have to be long. A typical outline for your testimony might be as follows:

1. What was your life like before Christ?
2. What happened at your conversion?
3. What has your life been like since trusting Christ?
4. Who was influential in helping you trust Christ?

If you were saved as a child it will need to be modified. Probably a simple outline of the gospel—i.e., How I knew I was a sinner? How I heard about Jesus forgiving my sin? What I did to be certain I was forgiven?—would probably suffice. Always use Bible verses.

WHAT SHOULD I BRING WITH ME WHEN I'M BAPTIZED?

Bring a friend. Bring someone who needs to know you've trusted Christ.

And, bring this stuff:

White handkerchief (to cover your nose!)

Change of clothes (don't forget underwear)

Towel

Shorts or pants to get wet

White shirt or t-shirt (Women will have option to use baptismal gowns).

Whatever you need to get looking presentable again.

A plastic bag for wet clothing.