

What I Need to Know About Water Baptism

In New Testament Scripture, there are two “ordinances” (practices Jesus ordained / told us to observe with other Christians) - The Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19) and Water Baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). The purpose of both is to signify by outward symbolism what Christ has accomplished in a believer's life through faith in Christ. As true believers, we are both instructed and commanded to submit to both as expressions of our faith in Christ.

In what has become known as the "Great Commission", Jesus gave to us the following command: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19.)

The word “baptize” is taken from the Greek word “*baptizo*” meaning “to immerse or submerge, to overflow or cover with water; to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash.” This definition lends to the symbolism of the old man being buried and rising in newness. It also portrays the atoning death of Christ and gives witness to the reality of His bodily resurrection. Baptism by full immersion is the method we choose here at THRIVE Christian Fellowship.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is an outward display / testimony of what has already taken place in the heart of someone who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Through Baptism, we identify symbolically with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Symbolically, we die to our old self and we rise out of the water into newness of life. (Romans 6:1-8)

WHY IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

- **It shows our love for the Lord.**
"If you love Me, keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:15-21)
"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3
- **It is a foundational truth.**
"So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment." Hebrews 6:1-2 (NLT)

WHY DO YOU NEED TO BE BAPTIZED?

1. **Act of Obedience.**
Throughout the New Testament, water baptism was practiced following conversion. This was done in direct response to Jesus' command that Christians everywhere are to “preach” and then “baptize” those who believe. Therefore, everyone who becomes a Christian needs to be baptized in submission to God / obedience to God's command.
2. **Statement of Faith.**
As mentioned earlier, water baptism is an outward statement of one's belief in Christ's atonement for our sins, the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit to guide and influence our lives, and the only means for gaining a clear, guilt-free conscience towards God. Baptism is a means to make a public statement of your faith.

3. Public Testimony.

In the New Testament, we see baptism practiced publicly. It was a very powerful and meaningful way to fulfill Jesus' promise, *"Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven."* (Matthew 10:32) Those who are publicly baptized are "acknowledging before men" their life's commitment to Him as their Lord and Savior.

WHAT BAPTISM CANNOT DO

1. Baptism cannot save you.

Salvation come through faith alone, and not works or acts. (Ephesians 2:8) Therefore, the act of baptism cannot save us. Rather, it gives evidence through public action that a person has already been saved.

2. Baptism cannot cleanse from sin.

The cleansing of sins takes place when we believe and accept Christ and ask Him to cleanse our sins (1 John 1:9). Baptism may bear witness to our cleansing, but the water itself is powerless to cleanse us from sin.

3. Baptism cannot release us from sinful habits.

Self-control, moral purity, holiness and much more are all the benefits of receiving Christ and allowing the Holy Spirit to influence and change us. Baptism should represent a statement on our part to live lives free from such controlling passions. Baptism alone will not magically or automatically free us from these things. But it does tell others that you have willingly submitted your life to the process of spiritual growth and change through the power of the Holy Spirit.

BAPTISM FAQ'S

Q. Do I need to be baptized in order to be saved?

A. No. In Romans 10:9-10, the Word says that if we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart, we shall be saved. Titus 3:5 shows us that it is not by righteous works that we are saved. Furthermore, Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works.

Q. Do I need to be saved first?

A. Yes. Because baptism is an outward expression of your faith in Jesus Christ, it is absolutely important that you be a believer in Jesus Christ first. Also, in the book of Acts, we see that scenario being followed by the new believers; first there was conversion, then they were baptized.

Q. How long after becoming a believer do I have to wait before I get baptized?

A. According to Acts 8:12, 26-39, the only thing that hinders one from being baptized is not believing in Jesus. Once you have received Christ, you may be baptized right away.

Q. Why was Jesus baptized?

A. As an example of obedience. Matthew 3:15 says, *"But Jesus answered and said to them, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him."*

Q. Should I get baptized again if I was baptized as a baby?

A. Yes, for several reasons: First, because baptism is an outward showing of what has already taken place in the heart of someone who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This requires someone to make a decision to receive Jesus after they have come to the knowledge of their sin. This would not be possible for an infant. Secondly, because baptism reflects a decision to lay down your life, pick up your cross and follow Jesus, this requires that you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior and have been born again. Therefore, we believe this would not be possible as an infant because this requires both the confession of your sins (thus the understanding of what sin is) and the decision to receive God's gift of salvation after understanding the wages of sin as death.

Please look up each of the Scriptures in this hand-out and read them carefully. If you have any questions about the scriptures or anything in this handout, please let us know! Contact us at info@thrivekg.org

