

According to our understanding of the New Testament, here are our answers to several important questions regarding baptism.

Who should be baptized? All those who are willing to repent of their sins and confess their belief in Jesus Christ should be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-39).

How should we be baptized? The word for “baptism” in the New Testament is the Greek word *baptizo*, which means “to immerse.” The New Testament says baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:1-5). Baptism serves as a symbol of the burial of the old self and the resurrection of the believer’s soul to walk in new life with Christ. Therefore, at Central, we baptize people by immersing them in water.

When should we be baptized? A person should be baptized at the time he or she trusts in Christ. The Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but in the New Testament church, a person’s baptism was always the first expression of faith, not separate from it. Baptism was not just a symbol or a memorial of faith, but a means of union with Christ and a benchmark of transformation, marking the place and time a person made a commitment to Christ (Romans 6:1-8). At Central, we are attempting to follow the original intent and practice of baptism. Therefore, we encourage people to be baptized as soon as they are ready to make a commitment to Christ.

Why should we be baptized? A person should be baptized to follow the example of Christ (Matthew 3:13-17), to obey Christ’s command (Matthew 28:19), to accept God’s grace and forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), to express trust in Christ (Acts 8:12-13), and to testify to God’s work in his or her life (Romans 6:1-8; Galatians 3:27). Baptism also serves to cleanse a guilty conscience (1 Peter 3:21). The Holy Spirit prompts individuals to recognize their sin and guilt. The only way the human soul can be wiped clean of sin is through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:27-10:7). This “washing away” of sin is clearly symbolized in the act of baptism (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

Since one of the biggest obstacles between God and man is human pride, baptism also offers a way for believers to humble themselves before God and others and admit their need for Christ’s redemption (James 4:6). In addition, baptism meets a God-given human need for expression of emotion and faith in Christ.

The act of baptism cannot save an individual. We are saved only through accepting Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Baptism demonstrates the believer’s acceptance of Christ and when the believer receives assurance of his or her faith. Those who were never baptized by immersion but were sprinkled for baptism as infants rest in God’s

merciful hands. We hope that Jesus will say to any person who has truly submitted to him but was not taught about immersion, "Your faith has saved you", yet someone who understands Christ's command to be baptized and refuses to obey should not consider themselves to have submitted to Christ.

Should a person ever be rebaptized? Any person who has trusted in Jesus as the only Son of God and who has willingly been immersed into Christ may become a partner of Central Christian Church whether the baptism occurred at Central or elsewhere.

Rebaptism is encouraged for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism experience because they don't remember it, they were coerced, or their heart was not right with God at the time. Anyone who sins after having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but rebaptism is not necessary (Acts 8:13-24).

Must a person be baptized during a worship service? No. Baptism at other times is acceptable (Acts 8:38; 16:33), but baptisms during worship services are encouraged at Central because they provide the opportunity to testify to one's faith before fellow believers and to show humility.

Paul exhorts all believers to unite, for we are all of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). Regardless of our beliefs regarding the mode of baptism, it is important for all Christians to seek unity as representatives of Christ's body. We believe the source of unity is the truth of God's word, and we pray that baptism will be a place of unity, not division, among believers (John 17:17-21).