

## PREPARING FOR YOUR BAPTISM

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. We are a visually oriented society today more than ever. What people hear is often impactful, but what they hear and can then see demonstrated before their very eyes will impact all the more. Water baptism is just such a picture.

When we were born physically, we were automatically identified with the kingdom of this world into which we came. When the Holy Spirit of God brings us spiritually to life in Christ, the Bible says we are born again. At the moment the Holy Spirit gave us birth (that is, at the moment we trusted Christ's death as payment for our personal sin) at that moment we were placed, dipped, immersed, baptized into Christ's Body, the Church universal, the glorious Bride of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:13-14).

After trusting Christ as our Savior, the Scriptures call us to publicly give testimony of our faith in Christ by means of water baptism (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 8:12, 36-37). Water baptism is God's creative way to picture our salvation. It helps us visualize what happened to us when we were born again. Water baptism, like a picture, helps you tell others what Christ did for you on the cross and openly identifies you with Him. You are, through water baptism, publicly identifying yourself with Christ--His death, His burial, His resurrection (Romans 6:1).

Who should be baptized therefore? The answer: everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Since water baptism is a symbolic portrayal of a Christian's identification with Christ, obviously only born again believers should be baptized. And indeed, that is what we find throughout the New Testament. Baptizing infants is not found in the New Testament and therefore we do not practice "infant baptism" at Fellowship Bible Church.

Water baptism in no way contributes to your spiritual birth. It simply bears witness to the fact that you have trusted Christ and are born again. It is, in essence, the first step in discipleship; the first step in following Jesus as our Master and Lord. Those whom God has already placed into Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit should therefore be baptized in water. But those being baptized must understand that not only are they giving testimony to the fact of their salvation, they are also testifying that they are disciples of Jesus Christ and desire to follow Him whole-heartedly throughout the rest of their life.

### Understanding the Word "Baptism"

The word baptism is not an English word at all, but a word transliterated (that is, carried over letter by letter) from the Greek language. In fact, there is only one letter different in both the noun and the verb forms of the word:

<u>Greek</u>		<u>English</u>
Noun. . . BAPTISMA	(Drop the final A) =	BAPTISM
Verb. . . . BAPTIZO	(Change O to E) =	BAPTIZE

You can see that the translators of the Bible into English did not actually translate the word. They merely copied it as it was in the original, and that doesn't tell us anything about its meaning. So the next question is: What does it mean?

The Greek term BAPTIZO is derived from an earlier and more basic verb, BAPTO. The primary meaning of this word is “to dip.” It was used to describe a piece of cloth being dipped into a dye solution. It was also used of dipping a pitcher into water, dipping an object into wax, dipping a finger into blood, and similar such uses. The -IZO ending of BAPTIZO adds a causal significance to the root word thus “to cause to dip.”

BAPTIZO is used in this way throughout Greek literature. It was used of soldiers passing through water immersed up to their chests or of animals that drowned in water. It was even used to describe a boat sinking or being “immersed” into a body of water. Almost all standard lexicons of the Greek language admit that the basic meaning of BAPTIZO is “to dip,” “to immerse,” or “to sink.”

### **Understanding the Message of Baptism**

In the New Testament, baptism involved a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Going down into the water symbolized or pictured being washed by the blood of the Lamb. Arising out of the water symbolized newness in Christ; a result of spiritual cleansing through Jesus. Through baptism, therefore, a believer in Jesus Christ is saying they are publicly identifying themselves with Christ and His Body. It is their announcement to all who watch and witness the event that Jesus Christ is their Savior.

### **The Value of a Verbal Testimony**

The baptism service is also an opportunity to verbally testify of your faith in Christ. Everyone who is baptized at Fellowship Bible Church is asked to prepare a simple testimony of their faith in Christ. For many people, this may involve explaining the day and even hour that they understood that Jesus died for their sins. Others may not remember the exact details leading up to their conversion but they know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is their Savior. The important thing in a verbal proclamation of faith is explaining that Jesus is your Savior and that it was through faith alone, and no merit or work on your part, that brought about your salvation. The issue should always be FAITH in Christ and not the WORKS of man. You’ll find on the back page a helpful outline to be used in giving a personal testimony.

### **The Procedure of Baptism**

At Fellowship Bible Church we practice baptism by immersion. At the orientation that precedes your baptism, the pastor will explain more thoroughly what this involves. The baptistery is located under the stage and is a “mini-baptistry” in which the person actually sits down to be baptized. You are dipped down into the water then back out symbolizing your death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ has done so very much for us. He came to this earth and was tortured and beaten for us. He went to the cross and ultimately died for us. He resided in the grave for three days until resurrected from the dead. He lives today to empower us and intercede in our behalf. He has done all this and more for us. It is certainly understandable that we would want to obey Him and publicly identify ourselves with Him---testifying of the wonders of His grace and love toward us. May God richly bless you as you prepare to express your love and devotion to Christ by means of baptism.

## **DRESS FOR THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE:**

**LADIES:** Wear dark clothing — jeans or dark pants with a dark colored blouse or top (light clothes often become “transparent” when wet).

**MEN:** Also, wear dark clothing — dark colored pants and an appropriate shirt or t-shirt.

You may go barefoot, but be careful not to slip.

## **WHAT TO BRING:**

### At the Church:

1. Two towels
2. A handkerchief to cover your nose
3. A complete change of clothes (outer and inner garments)
4. Swim shoes or flip flops

### At the Outdoor Service:

1. Two towels
2. A handkerchief to cover your nose
3. A complete change of (outer and inner garments)

## **WHAT TO SAY:**

Everyone will be asked to briefly (2 or 3 minutes) share their personal testimony of how they came to trust Christ as their personal Savior. Please see the attached sheet for helpful hints on how to give an effective personal testimony.

## **THE PROCEDURE FOR THE BAPTISM SERVICE**

(Only for services conducted at the Church)

1. Arrive at the church no later than 15 minutes before the service begins.
2. Please put one towel and change of clothes on the tables located in the hallway behind the stage.
3. Keep one towel with you and sit in the front right hand side of the church. Chairs will be reserved for you there.
4. We typically begin with congregational songs and then the officiating pastor will offer a short introduction to the ordinance of believer's baptism.
5. When your name is called, walk up the right hand stairs to the stage, and share your brief testimony at the microphone provided. Then you will hand your towel to the assistant and enter the baptistry.
6. Then you will sit in the baptistry and the one baptizing you will conduct the baptism.
7. After being baptized, someone will assist you in getting out of the baptistry and will hand you your towel.
8. Please walk behind the stage curtains to the hallway behind the stage, dry off briefly, retrieve your 2nd towel and clothes and proceed to the designated bathrooms. Children and men will use the Lower Level Youth (F3) bathrooms. Women will use the bathrooms behind the stage.
9. After changing, you may return to the Worship Center.
10. Children being baptized will go first. All the women will be baptized next and then the men.

## **GIVING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

### **I. Outline of testimony**

- A. **Before I trusted Christ** — Here you will want to share a little bit of your past life apart from Christ. Maybe you were very good and religious; this is what Paul shared with King Agrippa in Acts 26. But you may also want to share that you were definitely a sinner. Don't get into gory sins here, but you may share some specific things that clearly reveal you were indeed a sinner in need of Christ.
- B. **How I met Christ** — Here you will want to share the circumstances that brought you to faith as well as the actual time you finally did trust Christ as your Savior. Maybe it was through a family member, a close friend, or even a stranger. The important thing to remember here is that when you finish this part, the people listening to your testimony should have a clear idea of how one becomes a Christian. Emphasize that it is through faith in Christ — that by simple faith in what Jesus did on the cross you were saved. Try to avoid such phrases as "I opened up my heart to Christ" or "I gave my life to the Lord" or "I prayed and received Christ as my Savior." Remember, people are saved by believing Jesus died and rose again.
- C. **Since I trusted Christ** — In this final part of your testimony, you will want to share some specific things concerning what Jesus has done for you — how He has changed your life — how much He means to you. If applicable, you could mention such things as — He forgives and relieves from a sense of guilt, He's a friend to lean on in time of trouble, He gives purpose for living, He delivers from the fear of dying, etc. Remember to keep Christ central — not what you are doing, but what He is doing in your life. Also, be realistic — Christ does not eliminate all of your problems immediately.

### **II. Some final things to remember:**

- A. Keep it short, if possible — (about 1 page of longhand makes about 2 or 3 minutes of verbal presentation).
- B. Make your testimony personal — tell what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. Use "I", "me", "my", not "you."
- C. Use the Word of God. A verse or two of Scripture will add authority to your testimony. It is the Word of God that will bring conviction.
- D. Pray! Ask God to use your efforts and your testimony to bring honor and glory for Him. There may be someone listening who has never heard a personal testimony or the gospel presentation. What a wonderful opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work!
- E. If at all possible, invite your friends, neighbors, relatives, or whoever you can think of. Your baptism and the sharing of your testimony should be enjoyed by many.