



"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)

The verse above gives reference to one of Jesus' last commands while on earth. He shared that we were to become His disciples and be baptized, making both a private and public commitment to live for Him. This is what we celebrate through the a baptism service.

What is baptism?

Baptism is a significant event for every person who has experienced God's grace and forgiveness. The waters of baptism illustrate and symbolize God's work in our lives, identifying us as committed Christ-followers.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 6:1-11)

While baptism does not save a person from his/her sins, it does symbolize the grace we have received from God. As Scripture shares, Christians should seek ways of identifying themselves with Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism serves in this function, as well as symbolizing the cleansing from sin and changing of our lives through God's grace.

Keeping this in mind, remember that a symbol is not substance in itself. For example, marriage depends upon a *commitment* and not just on circular bands of gold. Wedding rings do not marry a couple - they are fitting symbols, but without the reality of the commitment are void of meaning. The same symbolism is true of baptism. What may outwardly identify you as a believer and Christ-follower does not make you one inwardly.

Who should be baptized?

Baptism is for all Christ-followers. Contrary to some misperceptions, baptism isn't for highly advanced "super Christians." Rather, it is for ordinary people who know and have trusted in God's love for them personally through Jesus Christ. This is shown in a person's life as:

- Having realized the individual's sin has separated him/her from God
- Having given up all efforts to reach God through good works or religious activity alone.
- Having reached the conclusion that Jesus Christ's death on the cross for his/her sins is the only thing that can bridge the gap between the individual and God.
- Having decided to trust in Christ alone for his/her salvation, turning away from a lifestyle of sin in order to daily be led by the Spirit.

What if I was baptized as a child?

Some churches baptize infants out of tradition, but since the Bible promotes baptism only for those who have made their own choice to follow Jesus we promote the same. For those baptized as a child, it was likely the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism now can be a celebration and culmination of that truth. Being baptized as a Christ-follower in no way negates nor renounces your infant experience. Rather, it is often an opportunity to invite family and friends to celebrate the culmination of that hope, recognizing what God has done in your life.

How do I know if I'm ready for baptism?

In the Bible we read that people were to not wait to be baptized but to do it right away and go public with their faith. Connection Church strongly encourages that anyone interested in baptism do the same, but not to rush into it out of mere pressure. Read through the Scriptures and talk with a pastor/leader before taking such an important step. In this way, individual concerns/questions can be addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

Children and young teenagers should have the consent of their parents in order to participate, as well as the ability to articulate their faith without any prompting or questioning. No one is ever too young or too old to take part in this awesome celebration, providing they have an understanding of what it means to God, His Church, and to themselves.



What will happen at the baptism service?

Since baptism is an incredible symbol of what God has done in your life, expect a whole lot of support and encouragement from your Connection Church family! This is an incredible chance for us to not only lift you up in prayer, but also to hear your "story." Don't sweat this – it's just a brief slice/summary of how you chose to place your faith in Jesus, as well as what has happened in your life since. This is your "testimony" - one of the powerful ways we overcome the devil when he tries to deceive us with lies. Together, we can celebrate the truth that you are a *new creation!* (2 Corinthians 5:17)



Some thoughts on preparing to share your story:

- For those from a non-Christian home/background, consider addressing these questions:
 1. Your life before Christ (How did you live differently or feel without Jesus in your life?).
 2. How you came to know Christ (Who helped? Share a general idea of when it happened and what was your point of transition.).
 3. Your life in Christ now (How has Christ changed you? How does He challenge you each day to grow even more?).
- For those from a Christian home/background, consider addressing these questions:
 1. Your life growing up (How much was God a part of your family? Where did you attend church? What was your perception of God?).
 2. How you came to personally own your faith (Who helped? Why the personal change? How did it happen?).
 3. Your life in Christ now (How has Christ changed you? How does He challenge you each day to grow even more?).

Other things to consider:

- You will get wet! Please bring a change of clothes and towel, as well as appropriate dress for the baptism:
 - Men: a dark t-shirt and a swimming shorts.
 - Ladies: a swimsuit under a dark t-shirt and a pair of shorts.
- Invite as many friends and family as you'd like! This is a great chance to share your faith with those in your life who've yet to become Christians.
- Please be on time and listen for your cue to get ready and change.
- Consider reading up on baptism from the Bible. Some passages include:
 - Mat. 3:13-17 (Jesus' baptism)
 - Acts 2:37-41 (church baptisms)
 - Mat. 23:16-20 (Jesus' words on baptism)
 - Acts 10:47-48 (one example)
 - Rom. 6:1-11 (identifying w/Christ)
 - Eph. 2:8-9 (salvation by grace)

BAPTISM

Thinking about getting baptized?

Please fill in the following and return back at least one week prior to the upcoming baptism.

Name: _____

Full Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

The Baptism quiz: (check the box if the answer is TRUE)

- I believe that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.
- I believe that Jesus died on the cross for all my sins.
- I believe that Jesus rose again from the dead.
- I have personally asked God to forgive my sins through Jesus Christ and received His entire forgiveness into my life.
- I believe that because of what Christ did, I can have a growing, personal relationship with God that is guided by His Holy Spirit.
- Trick question: I believe that there are many paths to heaven besides Jesus.
- I believe that Jesus is the only way to God.
- I believe that I have a purpose on this earth that is unique to me and yet involves me being an active contributing part of God's Church.
- I believe that when I die I will spend eternity in heaven.

The Big Picture: The Bible says that once a person admits that he/she is a sinner and turns to Christ for forgiveness, he/she is now a "Christian" and it's time to let the rest of the world know! Baptism has always stood as God's first public action for people who have moved from seeker to believer - from a lost sinner to a redeemed new creation. If you have come to this point in your spiritual journey, you are ready to be baptized!

Fill in the Blank: (look up the passage in the Bible)

- Matthew 28:19-20** says: "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, _____ them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."
- In passages such as **Acts 2:41, 8:12 and 10:47-48**, it is evident that baptism follows an individual's decision to _____.
- In **Romans 6:1-11**, the Apostle Paul explains the symbolism of the immersion mode of baptism (getting dunked under water). Share what at least one of these symbols are: _____.

Now what? Turn this form into the church or one of our lead team staff members. And start inviting all your family and friends... because that day is going to be AMAZING!