



## A Note From Our Pastor

You are about to embark on a study of one of the most meaningful and important aspects of the Christian life: baptism. For more than two thousand years, followers of Jesus Christ have willingly and faithfully submitted themselves to being baptized into Jesus Christ.

This FAQ's is designed to offer clear and straightforward answers about the most commonly asked questions people have about Christian baptism. In developing an understanding about this subject, it is important to study the passages in the New Testament which actually deal with and address baptism.

In putting this guide together, the foundational question we have asked is: *"What does the Bible say and teach about baptism?"* Therefore, we've included the text of many of the Scriptures about baptism for you. Other Scriptures are simply referenced by book, chapter, and verse. To receive the most from your study, we encourage you to read each passage cited.

One question you may have up front is this, ***"When I'm ready for baptism, what is my next step?"*** Our process for guiding a person to the moment of their baptism has been designed to be both simple and meaningful. Please go to the [Baptism page](http://JourneyRVA.com/baptism) on our website (JourneyRVA.com/baptism) to engage in that process and to schedule your baptism.

In **Psalm 119:18**, King David prayed, ***"Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction."*** At the beginning of a biblical study on baptism, prayer is certainly appropriate! As you begin your study, we invite you to bow in prayer and pray something along these lines:

*God, I humbly ask that You would open my mind and my heart to what Your Word teaches about baptism. As I study, may You direct my thoughts and give me insight into the Scriptures I will be reading. May my heart be receptive and responsive to the leading of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.*

May God bless you on your journey!

James Brummett  
Senior Pastor

# FAQs About Baptism

## What Is Baptism?

### It is a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ

To believe in Jesus is also to be baptized. Belief in Jesus and baptism go hand-in-hand.

*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved . . . . Mark 16:16*

*So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them. Acts 2:41*

*Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized. Acts 18:8*

### It is a point of departure from your past and an entrance into an altogether new life

For those who had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, their baptism was a vivid reminder that they had departed from a former way of life and had begun a new life in Christ ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Baptism was a tangible reminder of the point in time when this transition happened.

*Therefore we were buried with him (Jesus) by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4*

### It is the means of bringing us into union with the Triune God and into the Church of Jesus, his Body

In [Matthew 28:19](#), Jesus instructs that we are to be baptized *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* The Apostle Paul echoes this teaching of Jesus. In [Romans 6](#) he tells us that we are *“baptized into Christ Jesus”* (v. 3) and *“united with him”* (v. 5). To baptize in the *“name of Jesus”* ([Acts 2:38](#); [8:16](#)), or in the name of the triune God, is one and the same. We use the names of the Trinity since it was our Lord’s commission to His disciples and to His Church. Additionally, Paul says in [1 Corinthians 12:13](#) that when we were baptized we were also being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church. Therefore, to be baptized is to be brought into union with God and with the Church of Jesus Christ.

### It is God’s claim to ownership over me

The phrase *“in the name”* (*eis to onoma*, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) in [Matthew 28:19](#) was a technical phrase used in the world of Greek business and commerce to indicate the entry of a sum of money or an item of property into the account bearing the name of its owner. Its use in [Matthew 28:19](#) (and elsewhere) indicates that the purpose of baptism is to unite us with the Triune God in an *ownership* relation; we become His property in a special, intimate way.

The phrase *“in the name of”* means both to call on the character and power of the one named and it means to become the “possession of” the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **What is the Significance of Baptism?**

Baptism is not just a physical act. It is not just a ceremony. It is an act filled with deep spiritual meaning and reality. Consider the realities that baptism so vividly embodies:

### **It pictures Christ’s burial and resurrection**

*Christ died for our sins . . . he was buried . . . and he rose again. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

*We were therefore buried with him (Christ) through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may have new life. Romans 6:4*

### **It institutes my new life as a Christian**

*When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (TLB)*

*By our baptism then, we were buried with him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . so also we may live a new life. Romans 6:4 (GNT)*

### **It is my response of faith to Jesus as my Savior**

Christian baptism is always preceded by personal faith/trust/belief in Christ and is coupled with confession and repentance. Consider these passages:

*You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26 (NLT)*

*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16*

*Repent and be baptized . . . for the forgiveness of your sins. Acts 2:38*

*As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the man said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The man answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36-38*

*If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. Romans 10:9-10*

## **It embodies the cleansing of sin and is God's prescribed way of calling on his name for salvation**

In [Acts 22:16](#) Ananias instructed Saul to *"Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name"* (see also [Joel 2:32](#); [Acts 2:21](#); [Romans 10:13](#)). The result linked here with baptism is the washing away of sins, which is obviously a saving work which only God can perform. Therefore, in baptism God is the principal agent. This passage makes clear that in baptism we are calling on the name of the Lord to supernaturally wash away our sins (see also [Titus 3:5](#); [1 Corinthians 6:11](#)), which He has promised to do ([Acts 2:38](#)).

## **Why Be Baptized?**

### **Because Christ commands it**

*Jesus said, "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20 (GNB)*

That Jesus commanded baptism should settle the matter for anyone desiring to be a follower of His. And not only did He command baptism, He also modeled it for us in order to *"fulfill all righteousness"* ([Matthew 3:15](#)). The call to baptism is primary in our acceptance of Jesus and His teachings. To know that He has called us to be baptized into *"the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"* and not obey is unthinkable for those who claim or desire to be followers of His. Submission to Jesus' command to be baptized is the response of a believing heart to what He has done for us on the cross ([1 Peter 2:24](#)) and His offer of new birth ([John 3:3, 5](#)).

### **Because keeping Christ's command shows you know Him**

*This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands. The one who says, "I have come to know him," and yet doesn't keep his commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked. 1 John 2:3-4, 6*

### **Because you want to follow Christ's example**

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John.*  
Mark 1:9

Jesus believed that baptism was necessary for even Him to do in order to *"fulfill all righteousness"* ([Matthew 3:15](#)). Jesus, the Son of God, gave us a powerful example of humble submission to the will of God. He would not allow anything or anyone to deter Him from following God's will in this matter ([Matthew 3:14](#)). And because Jesus Himself was baptized no one who wishes to be a follower of His should avoid submission to this call of God.

## **Because you desire to be forgiven**

*“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:36-38*

*And now, why are you delaying? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’ Acts 22:16*

## **Because it unites you with Christ in a very special way**

*For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

*Galatians 3:26-27 (NASB 2020)*

Being *“clothed with Christ”* is a powerful reality and word picture of what happens when a person is baptized into Christ. It has been said that in baptism we put on Christ and are clothed in his righteousness (see [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). In a sense, baptism is our embrace of Christ, his authority over our lives, and his grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

## **Because it is the appeal we make to God for a clean conscience based in the resurrection of Jesus**

In his first letter, the Apostle Peter was encouraging Christians to be faithful to God, even though they were few in number. Peter reminded them of Noah, who was a godly man and one of only a few people (eight in all) that God saved at the time of the flood. Peter said Noah was saved through the waters of the flood, which serves as a foreshadowing of Christian baptism. The water that Noah came through separated him from those who were lost (they drowned and remained alienated from God). In a similar fashion for Peter’s first-century audience, the waters of baptism separated the saved from the unsaved:

*Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. 1 Peter 3:21-22 (NASB95)*

This passage epitomizes the essence of baptism as taught throughout the New Testament. It is a work of God, with our only role being that of calling upon God (see [Acts 22:16](#)) to do what He has promised: to save us by his grace through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The water of baptism, or the act of baptism, has no merit in itself; it is simply the God-ordained method of appealing by faith to the saving work of Jesus Christ.

There is a completeness, a wholeness that comes to those who are baptized. A person

doesn't come up out of the water after being baptized and ask, "Now what else do I need to do?" In effect there is a cleansing of the conscience that baptism brings both in personal experience and by God's design.

## How Should I Be Baptized?

### Like Jesus was baptized — by being immersed in water

*After He was baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water.*

Matthew 3:16 (NASB 2020)

The Greek word translated "baptize/baptism" is the word baptizo and it literally means to "immerse, dip under, or submerge beneath."

### Every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion

When Jesus was baptized, the Bible uses the Greek word baptizo to describe that event.

When Jesus commanded that His disciples be baptized, He used the Greek word baptizo to instruct them how to do it.

Every baptism recorded in the New Testament was by immersion, consistently using the Greek word baptizo to describe the event.

*... both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch ... went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8:38-39*

The Apostles, consistent with Jesus' example and command, instructed new believers to be immersed into Christ, using the Greek word baptizo to describe the action.

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38*

For the first 1200 years of Christian history immersion was the universally accepted and preferred mode of baptism. Many of the great churches built during those years, including the Leaning Tower of Pisa, have large pools in which they immersed people.

### It is the best way to picture a burial and resurrection

*Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life. Romans 6:3-4*

The picture immersion portrays is compelling: just as a person lowers you into the water, Christ lowers you into the pool of His grace until every inch of your soul is clean. Buried in a

watery grave, covered from head to foot with God's love, you are washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

Lewis Foster, a New Testament scholar who was on the translating committee for both the New King James and the New International Versions of the Bible, explains the origin of sprinkling and pouring as substitute forms of immersion:

*"Although other practices have been introduced as substitutes, history sustains that these (pouring and sprinkling) are changes from the original practice of immersion. The earliest historical example of pouring occurred in about A.D. 250. This was administered because of Novation's illness and was later called into question (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 6, 43, 14-15). Earlier references to practices other than immersion either give preference to immersion or do not deny the originality of immersion. The Roman Catholic Church is the earliest source of authority for a change from immersion. Clement V formally recognized sprinkling (but water must flow) as valid baptism in 1305" (New Testament Teaching On Baptism, The Christian Restoration Association).*

Consider the statements from the founders of three denominations and other church historians and scholars:

**Martin Luther (Lutheran):**

*"On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed into water according to the meaning of the word and the signification of the ordinance . . . as also without doubt it was instituted by Christ" (Works, Vol. II. p. 75, ed. 1551).*

**John Calvin (Presbyterian):**

*"The very word baptize signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the primitive church" (Institutes, Vol. XI., ch. 15, sec, 49).*

**John Wesley (Methodist):**

*"We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion" (Notes on N.T., Romans 6:3). "Baptized according to the custom of the first church and the rule of the Church of England, by immersion" (Journal, Vol, 1. p. 20).*

**F. Brenner (Roman Catholic):**

*"Thirteen hundred years was baptism generally and ordinarily performed by the immersion of a man under water" (Work on Baptism, Augusti. Denkwurd, VII. p. 62).*

**Philip Scaff (Presbyterian):**

*"Immersion, and not sprinkling, was unquestionably the original form of baptism. Baptism is to immerse in water" (History of Apostolic Church, pp. 568-569).*

## If God Knows My Heart, Isn't That Enough?

### Why the Emphasis on a Physical Action for Spiritual Results?

The two cannot be neatly separated. For example, the *physical* act of disobedience brought about a *spiritual* result in the garden ([Genesis 1-3](#)). In addition, the *physical* birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus himself brings the greatest *spiritual* potential to us: salvation. Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised that a *spiritual* decision to accept Christ by faith is linked to a *physical* response like baptism. Honest faith always results in appropriate action. In fact, Scripture says that faith without action is dead ([James 2:17](#)).

### Who Should Be Baptized?

#### Every person who has believed in Christ

According to the Scriptures, those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God should be baptized. The Ethiopian Eunuch asked Philip:

*"Look, there's water. What should keep me from being baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Acts 8:36-38*

Every person in the New Testament who was baptized first believed in who Jesus was—the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He or she also believed what Jesus did—died on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and was raised back to life three days later. We are never told to be baptized and then to come to belief in Jesus. As mentioned above, belief and baptism go hand-in-hand, but belief is primary and always precedes baptism. Note these additional passages:

*So those who accepted his message were baptized. Acts 2:41*

*Simon himself believed and was baptized. Acts 8:13 (NIV)*

*But when they believed Philip, as he proclaimed the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Acts 8:12*

#### Those who have repented of their sin

Closely connected to belief is repentance. Peter exhorted the people on Pentecost to:

*Repent . . . and be baptized. Acts 2:38*

Repentance means to have a change of mind. It means to make a U-turn or to do an about-face. You were going down the road of destruction, death and hell; but you repented, you turned around, changed your direction, and changed your mind. Therefore, baptism is for believers who have repented of their sin.



## Should an Infant Be Sprinkled or Christened?

Since baptism is by immersion and is for those who have believed and repented, it is not our practice to practice infant sprinkling or christening. An infant cannot personally believe. An infant cannot repent. Therefore we do not practice infant baptism whether by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

### Why Do Some Practice Infant Sprinkling?

The practice of infant sprinkling (or pouring) began because of the development and distortion of two doctrines. One is called “baptismal regeneration” which claims that the act of baptism alone actually washes away one’s sins, or regenerates the person. The doctrine of “baptismal regeneration” is a false doctrine and it is not taught in the Bible.

The other distortion has to do with the doctrine of “original sin.” Some in the church came to believe that an infant was born not only with a sinful nature (i.e. “original sin”), but also with “original guilt.” To them, this meant that an infant was condemned and guilty before God at birth simply because of the sin nature they inherited from Adam’s disobedience (see [Romans 5:12-13, 19](#)); they were personally guilty of Adam’s sin. Thus, if the child died he was doomed for hell. Since some in the church believed that the act of baptism actually saved the candidate, they began to do the next logical thing: they baptized babies believing that the act itself secured the child’s forgiveness and salvation from condemnation, *apart* from personal faith ([Romans 10:9](#)), repentance ([Acts 3:19](#)) or regeneration by the Holy Spirit ([Titus 3:5](#)).

We believe the New Testament clearly teaches baptism to be a personal response of a repentant believer in Jesus Christ. This is only possible for someone who has reached a point of maturity. Only then can they understand their separation from God because of their personal sin, and therefore understand their need to believe and trust in Jesus Christ ([Acts 16:30-31](#)), confess Christ as Lord ([Romans 10:9-10](#)), repent of their sin ([Acts 3:19](#)), and respond in obedience to Christ by being baptized ([Acts 2:37-38](#)). This point of maturity is not defined in the Bible as a certain age. Therefore the point of maturity and accountability for each person will vary.

Many denominations continue to sprinkle infants even though there is no New Testament teaching (or example) for such a practice. Some consider it to be an act of dedication for the parents. Others see it as a sort of down payment for the infant’s salvation. They say that the infant is being baptized so that he/she may one day be saved, rather than to save him/her. Still others believe infants are children of God because their parents have made a commitment to Christ and are Christians.

While we recognize the right of other churches to practice infant christening, we understand the Bible to teach that only professing believers qualify for baptism. Baptism is

the response of a believing, trusting heart. Therefore we do not believe there is any Biblical reason or need to have a baby baptized by any means.

## **What Happens to Children Who Die Before the Point of Maturity?**

We believe that these children will be received into the eternal presence of Christ. The Bible teaches that eternal condemnation comes to those who have willfully sinned.

**Galatians 5:19-21** describes the willful “acts” or “deeds” produced by our sinful nature. A person is guilty of these acts/deeds when they are carried out, not before (see **Ephesians 5:3-6** and **Colossians 3:5-10**).

Specifically, the Bible teaches that it is the sin of unbelief that causes a person to fall under God’s condemnation (**John 3:17-20; 8:24**). A young child does not have the ability to understand the message of Christ and therefore seek repentance. As **1 Thessalonians 1:8-10** indicates, it is an unwillingness to obey the gospel (i.e. making a personal faith-response to the gospel message) that brings “*everlasting destruction*.” It is those who know the truth about God and then ignore that truth who are deserving of death (see **Romans 1:18-32**). This is willful sin.

**Deuteronomy 1:26-46** describes a time when the Israelites willfully rebelled against God. As a result, God sentenced that entire generation to die in the desert. However, He exempted young children from that fate precisely because they had no part in the willful disobedience toward Him, for they had no way of knowing good from evil (**Deuteronomy 1:39**).

The Bible teaches that before the point of maturity all children belong to God; He even calls children born to those who despise Him “*my children*” (**Ezekiel 16:20-22**). God lays full claim to children, for in their innocence they belong to Him (**Matthew 18:1-14**).

No infant is capable of ignoring God’s truth. A young child cannot understand what God has revealed and then reject that truth. Upon the event of a tragic and untimely death, children will be received into the presence of God.

### **Can Babies Be Dedicated?**

It is appropriate, though not necessary, to dedicate a baby. It is more appropriate, however, for parents to *dedicate themselves* to rearing their children in the Lord (**Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Ephesians 6:4**). From time-to-time we offer parents of newborns an opportunity to dedicate themselves to rearing their child to know and love God.

When performed, baby dedication is also done as a reminder that our church has dedicated

itself to partnering with parents in their responsibility to lead their children to know, love, and follow Jesus. Please keep in mind, however, that this is a dedication ceremony, not a baptism. It is a commitment by parents to raise the child in a godly fashion, not a child's personal decision of faith.

## **What if I was Sprinkled as a Child? What Should I Do?**

First, you should be grateful that you had parents who cared enough about you to set you apart for God. Because of their devotion, you have an opportunity to complete their prayer by willingly submitting to Christ in His call to you to be immersed.

Second, being immersed is not a sign of disrespect for what your parents did, nor is it an act of condemnation toward them. The very opposite is true: it should be seen as the fulfillment of their prayers and best desires for you.

Be thankful for the heritage of concerned parents, but don't be negligent of your responsibility as an adult to make your personal commitment and obedience to God in baptism ([Philippians 2:12-13](#)).

## **Can a Child be Baptized?**

We refrain from baptizing children unless they have developed to the point where they can understand – to a reasonable degree – their spiritual separation from God due to their *personal* sin. They also need to be able to understand that Jesus died on the cross as the penalty for their sin and as their substitution before God. Without what Jesus has done on their behalf, there is no hope for eternal life with God. We believe that children begin to enter this phase of development around twelve years of age.

We have designed a helpful tool to assist parents ensure that their child is cognitive of what is mentioned immediately above and therefore ready to respond to Christ by their personal faith and repentance in baptism.

## **When Should I be Baptized?**

As soon as you have believed in Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior of the world. In the New Testament, there was a sense of urgency about baptism. Baptism is not something to be delayed or postponed.

*So those who accepted his message were baptized . . . that day. . . Acts 2:41*

*But when they believed . . . they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12 (NIV)*

*Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture. As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's water. What should keep me from being baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with*

*all your heart you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Acts 8:36-38*

*He escorted them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized. He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had come to believe in God with his entire household. Acts 16:30-34*

To be clear, the Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). In the New Testament a person’s baptism was always the immediate response of faith, not separate from it. Our desire is to restore the original intent and practice of baptism found in the New Testament. Therefore we encourage people to be baptized at the point they are ready to make a commitment to Christ.

## **Should a Person Ever be Re-baptized?**

Re-baptism is only 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 has fallen into a pattern of sin after having received Christ and having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but re-baptism is not necessary ([Acts 8:13-24](#)).

## **Does the Act of Baptism Itself Save a Person?**

No. Scripture is abundantly clear that only Jesus saves ([Acts 4:12](#)). The work of salvation is a finished work by Christ on the cross ([Hebrews 9:24-28](#); [10:10-14](#)). Baptism has no redemptive powers of its own. There is nothing special about the water in the river, pond, pool, or baptistry.

Tragically, some people believe they are going to heaven when they die just because they have been baptized. They have no genuine personal faith in Jesus, they don’t walk in repentance, they may never have made a personal profession of their faith, and yet they are banking on a hollow ceremony to save them. If baptism itself could save, then the cross of Jesus would have no meaning, his sacrificial death no point. If a person’s faith is in the act of baptism and not the Savior, he is trusting in something that has no power to save or to forgive. Without personal faith in Jesus, baptism (like anything else) is meaningless.

## **What if a Person is not Baptized? Can He or She be Saved?**

The Bible never specifically answers or addresses this question. It is never answered because no one ever asked, “Do I have to be baptized to be saved”? After the Gospel was an

accomplished fact (i.e. Jesus had been crucified, buried, and raised back to life), the pattern of teaching in the New Testament is clear: upon placing their faith in Jesus Christ, people were instructed to repent, confess, and be baptized (**Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:27-39**). It is noteworthy that each time they responded without questioning the necessity of repentance, confession, or baptism. Their faith led them to obey.

When the disciples were once confused about who could be saved, Jesus said, *“With God all things are possible”* (**Matthew 19:26**). God is the only one capable of forgiving sin and giving His Holy Spirit. He can do it at any time or in any way that he chooses. This being true, consider this question, “Why isn’t the person baptized?” There are at least three possible answers:

### **I never understood baptism**

Perhaps you were never instructed to be baptized. Maybe you’ve never been challenged to consider the issue. That’s entirely possible. If this is the case, we urge you to give thought to what God says about baptism. This doesn’t negate your faith up to this point. Part of maturity is an openness to understand and be obedient to new areas of the Christian walk.

### **I don’t want to**

Let’s analyze this response for a moment. God humbles himself by leaving heaven and being born in a stable. The God of the universe eats human food, feels human feelings, and dies a sinner’s death. He is spat upon, beaten, stripped naked, and nailed to a cross. He takes our eternal condemnation on Himself in our place. He then offers us the forgiveness of all our sins as a free gift and asks that we say yes to Him in baptism and someone responds, *“I don’t want to.”* Such a response does not make sense. Resistance of this kind points to a deeper problem of the heart. Such a person does not need a study of Christian baptism. He needs a long, honest examination of the soul. The incongruity of such disobedience puzzled even Jesus.

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things I say?”* Luke 6:46

Believers not only offer their sins, they yield their wills to Christ in baptism (remember, as discussed above, that in baptism we become the possession of the Triune God). To consciously and willfully refuse baptism and yet expect God to redeem you doesn’t make any sense. Such an action treats with contempt the grace and mercy of God through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for a person’s sin.

The highest motivation to do anything is because God asks you to do it. The heart of the repentant believer says, *“If you want me to be baptized in a pile of leaves, I’ll do it. I may not understand every reason, but neither do I understand how you could forgive someone like me.”* If one is resistant to Christ’s command to be baptized, one might wonder if there is genuine faith and repentance. Someone who understands the command of Christ to be baptized and refuses to obey should not consider himself to be belonging to Christ.

## **What if I die before I can get baptized?**

It is rare that physical death prevents a person from being baptized upon placing their faith in Jesus. However, we must understand that faith and baptism do not have the same kind of necessity in regard to salvation. Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation, since this is the natural act of submission to and dependence upon the One who is the source of salvation. Salvation is a gift that must be received, and faith is the empty hand with which we grasp that gift. So, it is conceivable that a person could be saved without baptism, but not without faith ([Mark 16:16](#)). Should everyone turning to Christ be baptized? Yes, absolutely. Should someone placing his faith in Christ be baptized as soon as possible (cf. [Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 16:30-34](#))? Yes, absolutely.

## **I'm Ready to Be Baptized. Now What?**

Journey's process for guiding a person to the moment of their baptism has been designed to be both simple and meaningful. Please go to the [baptism page](#) on our website ([JourneyRVA.com/baptism](http://JourneyRVA.com/baptism)) to engage in that process and to schedule your baptism.

## **What Should I Wear When I Am Baptized?**

We encourage you to wear a dark t-shirt and shorts (or something similar).

## **Will I Have to Say Anything?**

Yes. You will be asked to repeat the words of the Good Confession as a public profession of your personal faith in Jesus Christ: *"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, my Lord and my Savior."*

## **Can My Family Be Baptized Together?**

Yes. If each family member fully understands the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. Young children who wish to be baptized are asked to meet with a staff member from our Family Ministry for a pre-baptism conversation.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal decision, not a family tradition. It is unwise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to make their own decision to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience and response to Christ.

## Concluding Thoughts

We want to teach and practice everything the Bible teaches about baptism. We are not interested in making it more important than Scripture does. On the other hand, we are not willing to make it any less important, either. We believe that the answers provided in this study reflect what the Bible clearly teaches in regard to Christian baptism.

### **Don't allow baptism to be something it is not.**

Apart from the cross it has no significance. If you are trusting the water to save you, you have missed the message of grace. Beware of dogmatism. No one on this side of heaven can fully understand the majesty of baptism. Watch out for the one who claims to have a corner on the issue.

### **Don't prevent baptism from being what God intended.**

It is a precious gift of God's grace. It is a beautiful occasion of our union with Christ. It is a willing plunge into the power and promise of Christ. In baptism God signs and seals our conversion to Him. This is no optional command of Christ. This is no trivial issue. Baptism is a holy event and therefore is not to be taken lightly. The washing of baptism ([Acts 22:16](#); [Titus 3:5](#); [Ephesians 5:25-27](#); [1 Corinthians 6:11](#)) signifies our admission that apart from Christ we are dirty and defiled by sin, but in and through Christ we are cleansed and purified from sin. The burial of baptism ([Romans 6:1-5](#)) signifies that we are willing to die to sin and self and that we can be made alive again because of Him. Christ's death becomes our death. Christ's resurrection becomes our resurrection. Christ's life becomes our life ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

### **For all we may not understand about baptism, we can be sure of this:**

Baptism is a holy moment commanded by Jesus to be obeyed by all who place their faith in Him.

Remember the words of Christ at His own baptism:

*"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Matthew 3:15*

## Personal Processing Questions

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow.

### **Matthew 3:11, 13-17**

According to Matthew 3:11, why was John baptizing?

Why did Jesus insist on being baptized?

What two significant “signs” accompanied the baptism of Jesus?

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

Upon whose authority is the “great commission” given?

Into whose name(s) is baptism to be done? Why is this important?

What is to follow the baptism of a disciple?

What special promise goes with this command?

### **Mark 16:15-16**

What is the promise to the one who has both believed and been baptized?

What warning is related to refusal to believe in Jesus?

### **Acts 2:36-39**

When the people were ready to accept Christ, what did Peter tell them to do?

What were they assured of if they sincerely took these steps?

When were they baptized?

### **Acts 8:34-39**

What was the message preached by Philip?

How did the eunuch express his faith in words? In actions?



What form of baptism is described in these verses?

**Acts 16:30-34**

What did Paul and Silas tell the jailer to do when he asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

What message was given to the jailer and his family?

How did the jailer show repentance (a change of heart and actions) toward Paul and Silas?

What was the reason for the rejoicing of the jailer and his family?

Why do you suppose the jailer and his family were baptized during the night?

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**Final Questions:**

What remaining questions do you have about baptism?

What keeps you from placing your faith in Jesus and being baptized?

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