

Baptism



Preliminary Definitions

“Baptism is a ceremonial immersion in water, or application of water, as an initiatory rite or sacrament of the Christian church.” –*Dictionary.com*

“Baptism is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which one is admitted as a full member of the Christian Church and, in view of some, as a member of the particular Church in which the baptism is administered.” –*Wikipedia*

“Baptism is my outward expression of being in Christ.” –*Anonymous*

“In the New Testament, baptism is the immediate public expression of one’s conversion to Christ and is spoken of as the point at which one becomes united to Christ.” –*Robert Mohrlang*

What Baptism Isn’t

Baptism Isn’t Necessary for Salvation

- The Bible teaches that there is no work that a man or woman can perform to be saved.

***Ephesians 2:8-9** – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

- The Bible teaches that eternal life is “the free gift of God.”

***Romans 6:23** – For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Disclaimer

Many churches hold strong differences of viewpoint regarding this subject. However, it is the position of Grace Church that differences in view of baptism may not be “major” doctrinal issues that should divide the Church.

What Baptism Is

1. An Act of Expression

- Throughout the New Testament—Galatians, Colossians, Ephesians, Romans, 1 Peter, 1 Corinthians, Acts, and all the Gospels—there is an emphasis on and a revelation of the pattern of baptism as a response to salvation.
- Baptism is an “outward expression of inward truth.” Just as Christ was crucified and buried in death, so we are immersed in the water. Likewise, as Christ was raised from the dead, so we are brought out of the water.

***Romans 6:1-4** – 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.*

- In many ways, baptism is like a wedding ring: an outward symbol of an inward commitment.



2. An Act of Obedience

***Matthew 28:18-20** – Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

“Christian baptism, then, signifies both the death of our old life in sin and the experience of new life in Christ that replaces it.”

-Robert Mohrlang

- With authority, Jesus commands us to make disciples and baptize. To be a disciple of Jesus, we are told to be baptized.
- Notice it says the “name” (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. An Act of Identification

- "Baptism is not in the O.T. It shows up in the N.T. The reason we don't know much is because baptism started in the 'silent period' between Malachi and Matthew." -Randy Smith

- Baptism in Jesus' time was a way of identifying oneself with something or someone:

1 Cor. 1:13-15 – What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.

- Baptism, then, is a way to identify oneself with God and His community. It is like a membership card.



There is only one thing required of you to be baptized: You must make a personal decision to believe and accept the salvation of God through Jesus Christ.

Those who received his word were baptized –Acts 2:41

When they believed... they were baptized. –Acts 8:12

Commonly Asked Questions

1. Does it matter how many times someone is dunked?

- The Bible does not give much insight into the procedure of baptism. Some churches baptize by single immersion (one dunk). Grace Church practices triune immersion (three dunks).
- Ultimately, the Bible isn't clear how many times a person should be dunked. Therefore, the important thing is not how many times a person is immersed, but that they are being immersed in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit in obedience to Matt. 28:19-20.

Why does Grace Church practice triune immersion? During the Byzantine period (330-1453 AD), some Christians rejected the doctrine of the Trinity (the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Because of this, they would be baptized in the name of Jesus, but not the Holy Spirit.

The reaction of the Church was to have people immersed three times: once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit, thus symbolizing agreement with the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. Does it matter if you get dunked forward or backward?

- Those who baptize "backward" do so to represent the posture of a dead person, or buried facing upward.
- Those who baptize forward do so because Romans 6 mentions being baptized into the likeness of Christ. This is coupled with John 19:30, which indicates that Jesus, "bowed his head (*forward*) and gave up His spirit" at the crucifixion.

3. What about infant baptism (Paedobaptism)?

- Biblically, baptism follows our faith in Christ and repentance of sin and thus is always an informed and conscious decision. It is because of this that Grace Church does not perform infant baptism. However, we do perform baby dedication services as a way for parents to commit to raise their children in a God-honoring way.

4. If I have been baptized in the past, how do I know if my baptism is genuine?

- Your baptism is genuine if you did it as a conscious choice as a sincere believer and follower of Jesus.

5. If I've been baptized in the past, should I be baptized again at Grace Church?

- At Grace Church, we practice triune immersion as a requirement of membership for those who have not yet been baptized. However, our bylaws indicate that if a person has already been baptized via single immersion (one dunk) into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Grace Church will consider that baptism as valid in terms of consideration for membership.

6. Does it matter if you sprinkle or immerse?

- Biblically, baptism is always done by way of immersion.
- The Greek word for "baptize" (*baptizo*) means "to immerse completely" or "to plunge under."

7. Who can baptize me?

- The Bible does not say that a pastor or leader must baptize you. The pattern of the New Testament is that the person who leads another to Christ does the baptizing.
- At Grace, it is common for children to be baptized by believing fathers who have already been baptized. Life Group Leaders baptize people in their groups as well.

8. What should I expect during a baptism service?

- We ask that you bring a towel, shorts, and a dark colored t-shirt.
- The Pastor leading the service will call you to the baptism pool. The person baptizing you will ask that you to briefly share what God has done and is doing in your life and why you want to be baptized.

Many people are afraid to be baptized because it requires them to be in front of a group of people. In the early church, people were baptized naked! If you are feeling anxiety about baptism, be comforted.

- After you share, the person baptizing you will dunk you three times forward, pausing in between each dunk.
- Finally, the person baptizing you will pray for you at the end.

9. Should I invite friends and family to my baptism?

- Absolutely! Baptism is an outward expression to the world that you want to be identified with Christ.