

## WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT BAPTISM

Baptism is not merely an "all about me" personal or spiritual milestone in the Christian life. Baptism is: 1.) a *demonstration* of what has happened in a person through the new birth (Rom 6:1-4], and 2.) a *declaration* that someone belongs to Christ and the community of Redeemed (Acts 2:41; Eph. 4:4-7). Thus, baptism is tied to membership in the church.

Since local churches are where God has set up the spiritual care and oversight of his sheep, the Elders of GCBC are blessed to baptize those whom Christ has saved, and who desire to declare that they belong to Christ, and to His Body, for His glory.

### **The Motive for Baptism:** Baptism is a *command* of the Lord

- The Lord's Command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age: (Matt. 28:19-20). Jesus' word is sufficient warrant for the baptism of believers.
- The practice of the Early Church: This reveals the application for the Lord's words by those who heard Him speak. We read concerning the converts on the Day of Pentecost: "So then, those who had received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Additional examples of apostolic practice include Acts 8:33-38; 10:44-48; 16:31-33; and 18:8.

### **The Mandate for Baptism:** Baptism is for *Christians* alone

- Christians are commanded to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them: (Matt 28:19).
- In Acts, baptism was for "those who had received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The eunuch confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Philip baptized him (Acts 8:30-38). The jailer at Philippi "and all his household...rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household" (Acts 16:33-34).
- Believers are recipients of the Holy Spirit. While Peter was preaching to Cornelius, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message." Peter then inquired, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" He then commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:44-48).
- We conclude that baptism is limited to disciples or believers – those who have received the Holy Spirit. These different designations refer to the same people – namely, Christians. Therefore, anyone who was previously baptized before being born again (John 3:3) should be baptized as a believer, since baptism is a joyful post-conversion act of obedience.

### **The Message of Baptism:** Baptism is a method of identification.

- Identification with Christ – This identification is with His death, burial, and resurrection. Paul asked, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).
- Identification with the Church – "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

### **The Method for Baptism:** Baptism is by immersion in water.

- The Meaning – The meaning of *baptize* is "to completely immerse something." It is evident that submerging one in the water and lifting him from it should be the method of baptism, as it gives the most vivid picture of what has taken place in salvation (Romans 6:3-4).
- The Example – The examples of baptism recorded in Scripture imply immersion (Mark 1:10; Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38-39).

## TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

On a sheet of paper or on your computer, write or type your testimony. A baptism testimony is the salvation account or story of a person who has heard the gospel, been given life through the Spirit, and responded in God-given faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins!

**As you think and pray in preparing your baptism testimony,** here are four items to include:

A description of what your life was like before Christ saved you

A description of the events surrounding your conversion (I.e., how was it that Christ exposed your need for salvation to you?)

A description of the changes in your life since you have come to know Christ

A sentence explaining why you desire to be baptized (**Example:** "This morning I want to be baptized to publicly declare that Christ has transformed me and is Lord of my life, and to identify with the Body of Christ here at GCBC.")

***Gospel Reminder As You Prepare:***

*Remember that this is an opportunity to proclaim Christ and the gospel as you speak of his saving work in your life! Feel free to include significant Bible verses that are relevant to your conversion.*

*Please limit your testimony to a two-sided (front & back), double-spaced page. Type size should be at least 12 points – big enough for you to read off!*

*After writing up your testimony, please submit it to the Pastor that you met with for your membership interview for review. From there you will be scheduled at the next baptism service.*