

BAPTISM BASICS

Grace Church of Orange

“We believe that Christ commissioned His church to observe believer baptism and the Lord’s Supper until He returns.” (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:37-38; Acts 8:26-39; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 16:31-34; Romans 6:1-4; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.)

Grace Church practices believer’s baptism.

1. WHAT IS BELIEVER’S BAPTISM?

- A. It is a public act of obedience on the part of a believer in Jesus Christ involving being immersed in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- B. Believer’s baptism is baptizing a believer in Jesus Christ. Someone who knows Jesus as their Savior and Lord professes that faith publicly through baptism.
- C. The Bible teaches that baptism should follow personal, genuine, cognitive faith. Faith is a gift of God, not a result of human effort (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Acts 8:12; Acts 8:36-39; Acts 16:31-34

- 1. Personal faith means that one acknowledges Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of one’s life. They accept God’s free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ, not as something they could earn or deserve or have a right to, but as what it is, a pure gift from God (John 1:12; Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-10). Being raised in a Christian home does not make one a Christian. Only God saves people and rescues them from Satan’s power and sin’s penalty (1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6).
 - 2. Genuine faith means faith is rooted in the heart, not just the head. Faith in Jesus is not just knowing some facts and agreeing. It also involves moving the heart to respond in repentance and change.
 - 3. Cognitive faith means faith is also rooted in the mind, not just from the heart. Faith in Jesus is not just an emotional response. We accept Jesus because following Him answers the question of life better than any other philosophy or religion.
- D. Since the Bible teaches that baptism always follows personal faith in Jesus Christ, a person must have this faith before they are baptized. Since infants cannot have this kind of faith and the Bible does not teach or give any examples of infant baptism, we do not practice infant baptism. Children were baptized in the Bible and parents should spend time with their children to make sure they understand what true faith is.

E. Biblical examples of faith in Jesus preceding baptism:

Matthew 28:19	Make disciples and baptize
Acts 2:38-41	Repent and be baptized
Acts 8:12	What shouldn't I be baptized?...If you believe with all your heart, you may...I believe...and Philip baptized him.
Acts 16:31-34	Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved...immediately he and all his family were baptized.
Acts 18:8	And many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

F. A common misconception is that one needs to be baptized to go to heaven or that baptism washes away our sin. Based upon everything that has been stated already, it is obvious that this is not true. Only Jesus can get someone to heaven. On Jesus saves us from sin. No amount of effort or good works could ever earn salvation. Salvation in Christ is based upon the grace and mercy of God. God in His grace gives us what we do not deserve (forgiveness, acceptance, new life in Christ) and in His mercy does not give us what we do deserve (separation from God because of our sin; God's wrath against our sin).

G. In summary, baptism is an outward expression to others of our inward commitment of true faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord of our lives. It is symbolic of dying and being raised again to new life.

2. WHY GET BAPTIZED?

- A. Jesus Christ commanded it. (Matthew 28:19)
- B. Jesus Christ and the Apostles taught and modeled it. (Acts 2:37-38; 10:44-48)
- C. The Church has historically practiced believer baptism.
From the book of Acts onward.

3. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

- A. Men and Women (Acts 8:12)
- B. Children (Acts 2:38-41)
- C. Households (Acts 16:14-15; 25-34; 1 Cor. 1:16)
These passages speak of entire households being baptized. It is important to note that infants are not mentioned and that in all cases the members of the households heard the message and believed, then they were baptized.

4. WHEN TO BE BAPTIZED.

- A. Immediately after conversion (Acts 2:38-41; Acts 16:33; Acts 8:36-38)
- B. Sometime after coming to faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12; Acts 18:8)

Faith should always precede baptism because faith is the only effective means of grace. (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 11:6)

5. DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

- A. Catholic
Baptism works in and of itself. It is an effective means of grace (salvation). Baptism washes away original sin. No faith is required. God awakens faith through baptism. Baptism is for everyone – infants, children and adults.
- B. Lutheran
Baptism does not work in and of itself. It is an effective means of grace when it is mixed with faith. We are justified by faith alone, but we receive the benefits of salvation through baptism. Baptism is for believing children, believing adults and all infants.
- C. Reformed/Presbyterian
God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and all his offspring. All adults who believe and their children are part of the covenant promise. Baptism is only for believing adults and their children. Baptism joins people to the promises of the covenant. It activates the covenant.
- D. Baptist/Independent/Free Church
Faith is the only effective means of grace. Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward change and commitment. Only those who have reached an age of accountability and are able to and have made an expression of genuine faith can be baptized.

6. MODES OF BAPTISM (WAYS TO BE BAPTIZED).

- A. Secular usage of the word “baptize”.
The sinking of a ship; drowning; overwhelmed.
- B. Usage of specific words for “pour” and “sprinkle”.
“Rantidzo” = sprinkling
“Epicheo & Proschusus” = pouring
These words are used in the New Testament but never in the context of baptism.
- C. Examples from Scripture
John 3:23 ...Because there was plenty of water there
Mark 1:10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water...
Acts 8:36-39 Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the
 Water...When they came up out of the water...

Immersion or dipping makes the most sense as the primary mode of baptism, especially in light of the purpose of baptism in the next section.

7. THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

- A. To obey Jesus and follow Him.
- B. To testify to others of the grace of God in our lives. Baptism is an outward expression to our family and friends of our inward commitment of true faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- C. To give a public sign of our relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - a. We are partakers in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
(Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:11-12)
 - b. There has been a transfer of ownership of our life over to Jesus.
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Romans 10:9-10)
 - c. We have a deep commitment to and family bond with the Body of Christ.
(Galatians 6:2; John 11:38-44)
We were not created to live life alone. We are designed to live in community. We are to carry one another's burdens. Baptism is a commitment to help one another grow in Christ. Romans 12:4-5. Purpose and meaning in life are achieved as we know God's will for our lives in the Body of Christ. Baptism acknowledges your commitment to find your place in the Body.

8. THE BLESSING OF BAPTISM

“In all the discussion over the mode of baptism and the disputes over its meaning, it is easy for Christians to lose sight of the significance and beauty of baptism and to disregard the tremendous blessing that accompanies this ceremony.

The amazing truths of passing through the waters of judgment safely, of dying and rising with Christ, and of having our sins washed away, are truths of momentous and eternal proportion and ought to be an occasion for giving great glory and praise to God.

When baptism is properly carried out then of course it brings some spiritual benefits to the believer as well. There is the blessing of God's favor that comes with all obedience, as well as the joy that comes through public profession of one's faith, and the reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and of washing away sins. Certainly the Lord gave us baptism to strengthen and encourage our faith—and it should do so for everyone who is baptized and for every believer who witnesses a baptism."

-Wayne Grudem