



WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection.

"Christ died for our sins... He was buried... and He rose again." --I Cor. 15:3-4

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ." --Col. 2:12

2. It illustrates 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 Cor. 5:17

"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!" --Rom. 6:4

Baptism does not make you a believer - it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you, only your faith in Christ and through His power does that occur. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it is the outward symbol of the commitment you make in your heart.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." --Ephesians 2:8,9

WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

1. Because Jesus was baptized that way.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water." --Matt. 3:16

2. Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

"...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..." --Acts 8:38-39

The Greek work *Baptizo* means, "To immerse or dip under water." It best symbolized a burial and resurrection!

3. The founders of denominations agree:

Martin Luther... "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the work imports and the mystery signifies."

John Calvin... "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."

John Wesley... "Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

1. Every person who has believed in Christ.

"Those who believe and accepted His message were baptized..." --Acts 2:41

"Simon himself believed and was baptized..." --Acts 8:13

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." --Acts 8:12

2. At River Church, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a "baptism of confirmation" for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed.

This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose of this type of baptism is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ. At River Church, it is a partnership requirement that every partner must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were "confirmed" as children.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as you have believed.

"Those who believe[d]...were baptized...that day!" --Acts 2:41

"Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. 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 right now?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him." --Acts 8:35-38

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect", you'll never feel "good enough!"

CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?

Yes! If each family member understands fully 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 our Family Pastor for a pre-baptism conversation.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ and follow Him, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?

Women should wear shorts and a top, preferably not white, which will preserve modesty. Men, may wear a swimsuit and t-shirt. Bring a change of clothes, a towel, and a plastic bag for your wet articles of clothing. We provide changing rooms.

WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

At the beginning of the service, Pastor Chris will briefly explain the meaning of baptism. You will wait up at the front of the stage for your turn to be baptized. Our Connections team will tell you when and where to show up for these proceedings. One of the pastors from our team will introduce you, briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others. Later you will be mailed a certificate/picture of your baptism. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.