

Questions and answers about baptism

Q. What is “baptismal regeneration”?

A. Baptismal regeneration means we would have to believe that a person is saved by the act of baptism itself. We cannot say that because the Bible says we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), not that we are saved by baptism. Baptism is “not a removal of dirt from the body, but an appeal to God for a clear conscience” (1 Peter 3:21).

Q. Can a person be a Christian and not be baptized?

A. To say “yes” is to say more than the Bible says (Mark 16:16). To say “no” is to presume to be God. Once a person has said yes to Jesus as Savior AND Lord, he has forfeited all rights to say no to any of Christ’s commands. Baptism is one of those commands (Matthew 28:18-19).

Q. Why do we require a person to be a baptized believer in order to be a member of Canyon Hills?

A. Because in all the biblical examples we have, this was the pattern of the early church. We do not believe that we would be following Scripture if we allowed less than that.

Q. How soon should a person be baptized once he has received Christ?

A. The pattern in Acts was “immediately.” Clearly the principle of “delayed obedience being equal to disobedience” was applied when it came to a believer’s baptism.

Q. Should I be baptized “again” if I was baptized as a baby?

A. Yes, infant baptism is neither scriptural nor necessary. The Bible teaches believer’s baptism only (Mark 16:16).

Q. Is baptism a sacrament?

A. Yes. Although the word sacrament is not specifically used in the Bible, it is nonetheless an important one. It literally means “something sacred.” The use of this word in evangelical frameworks has come to mean: an outward and visible sign or symbol of an inward and spiritual grace. A sign or a symbol always points to a reality greater than itself. Therefore, it is important to understand that the waters of baptism do not impart God’s grace and mercy, but instead point to the sacred reality of God’s grace and mercy being present in the heart of the believer. Much like wearing a wedding ring does not make someone married, it simply points to the love and commitment one had made in the heart for their spouse.

*“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....”*

MATTHEW 28:19

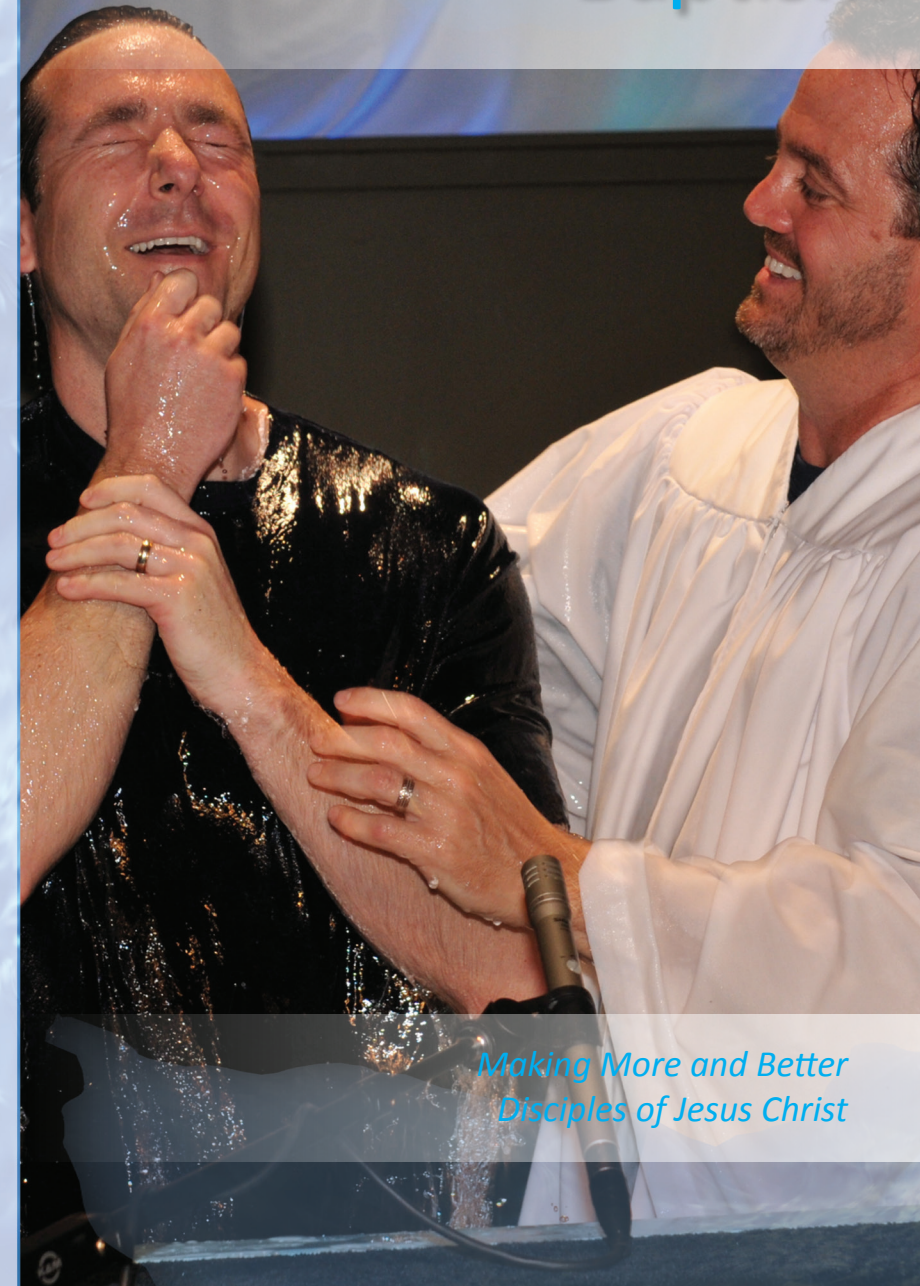


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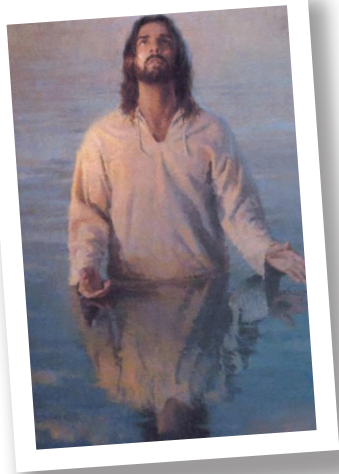
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What God’s Word says about Baptism



*Making More and Better
Disciples of Jesus Christ*



Revealing God's purpose in being baptized

Baptism is not an ordinance of the Church to be ignored nor is it to be elevated above its intended purpose and value. This Bible study forms the framework for the purpose and practice of baptism at Canyon Hills Community Church.

What did Jesus do?

He began His public life and ministry with baptism (Matthew 3:11-17). At the age of thirty, Jesus enters the stage of human history by publicly being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. This significant event marked the beginning of Jesus' journey to the cross of Calvary. First, it marked His *identification* with sinners. He was called to identify with the people He came to deliver. Ultimately, Jesus would bear the sins of all mankind and His baptism was a visible example of His willingness and commitment to do all the right things before God.

Secondly, it marked the *revelation of His Messiahship*. Jesus had arrived to do the will of His Father. Before a watching world, His life purpose and identity were revealed by heaven itself. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended and landed on Him, and a voice from heaven declared that Jesus was God's Son and that God was pleased with Him. Thirdly, the baptism of Jesus is to be understood as a foreshadow of what He would so willingly go through on our behalf. His death, burial, and resurrection are perfectly pictured in His baptism.

What did Jesus say?

He concluded His public life and ministry with baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). It is often believed that a man's last words are some of the most significant and meaningful of his life.

In His last conversation while visibly present on earth, Jesus gave the command to make disciples, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus called the church to identify the beginning of each disciple's decision to follow Him by being baptized. There were to be no "closet Christians." He chose to have His last words centered on the act of baptism.

It is clear that the historical record indicates that both the example of Jesus and the last command of Jesus included baptism.

Baptism Has a Very Specific Meaning for the Believer

The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo* and is translated as: to dip, plunge, overwhelm, soak, or immerse. It is also a word often used to describe the process of fabric being put into a vat of dye that literally changes the color of the fabric before it is raised up from the vat to dry. It is the word always used in connection with a believer's baptism. The Greek word for sprinkle is *rantizo*, and it is never used in connection with believer's baptism.

1. A Confession of Faith in Christ (Acts 2:34-38)

When Peter declared, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the very first converts to Christianity be baptized, he left no doubt that they were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Our identity as a faithful follower of Christ is put on public display for all the church to hear and see. Baptism is the believer's first opportunity to unashamedly declare his allegiance to Christ. If a person has genuinely accepted Christ, he should not only be able, but willing to say so!

2. A Communion of Life in Christ (Romans 6:3-6)

The Apostle Paul conveys that baptism is a deep level of communion with Christ. Both Christ's death and resurrection are substitutionary on our behalf, and when Christ died for the believer, it was as though the believer and all of his sin died with Him. When Christ was resurrected, it was as though the



believer was resurrected, being rescued from the punishment of death that his sins deserved. Baptism symbolizes this unique and miraculous relationship with Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, our spirit has been made alive. When a person is baptized, he declares that he is united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.



3. A Consummation of Eternity with Christ (Romans 6:22)

As the Apostle Paul's discussion of salvation and baptism is concluding, he declares that the benefit we reap is holiness and eternal life. For the follower of Christ, baptism symbolizes a transferal of citizenship from this world to heaven. Baptism, more than any other physical act, is a picture of the gift of eternal life.

Who should be baptized?

The Bible is very clear when it comes to understanding who is a proper candidate for believer's baptism.

Those Who Believe In Christ.

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

Those Who Repent Of Their Sin.

"Repent and be baptized, every one 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

Those Who Profess To Be Disciples Of Christ.

"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." —Matthew 28:18-19

Because of the necessity and individuality of these requirements, it would be reasonable to conclude that infants are not proper candidates for baptism.