



What is Baptism?

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision, which is your commitment to be a lifelong follower of Jesus Christ. It is a declaration of thanksgiving to God for His beautiful and completely undeserved gift of salvation, which has rescued you from death, hell, and the grave.

And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (Acts 16:31-34, ESV)

Baptism doesn't save a person – only faith in Jesus will do that.

What Does Baptism Mean?

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death

no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. (Romans 6:3-10, ESV)

Besides being a public declaration of faith in Jesus, water baptism has great symbolic meaning of our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a picture of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we go down into the water, it is as though we are dying to ourselves and our sinful ways that have separated us from God, just as Jesus died. Coming up out of the water is a symbol of resurrection – complete victory over eternal death and coming into our new life, just as Jesus was resurrected. Being baptized is not equal to salvation, but it shows a picture of salvation.

Think of it like a ring that symbolizes marriage. If you take your wedding ring off, you are no less married; however, with it on, it shows the rest of the world that you are committed in a relationship unlike anything else.

You have been made new in your salvation. Baptism is a symbol to those watching and to yourself that, because God's grace has redeemed you through the gift of salvation, you are no longer a slave to sin and death, but are alive in Christ, and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

He saved us, not by works done by us in righteousness, but because of his mercy, through the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

Why Should I Be Baptized?

Jesus instructs us to be baptized:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

and sets the example by being baptized:

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. (Mark 1:9)

Obedience to Jesus shows we believe and follow Him.¹ Because Jesus went public about His

love for us, we can go public about our love for Him. Being baptized shows that we have turned away from a life of sin and are now committed to following Jesus.

And Peter said to them, “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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:38-41, ESV)

When Is the Best Time to be Baptized?

For everyone who has come to salvation, and truly decides to make a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus, baptism is the next step. Anyone who truly commits his or her life to following Jesus is ready to be baptized:

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12, ESV)

Those who accepted his message were baptized.... (Acts 2:41).

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8:35-39).

What Changes When You Go Public?

Declaring Jesus is Lord of your life changes everything. In order to be saved, we need to believe in our hearts, and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. Baptism publicly says that Jesus is Lord of your life.

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:9-13, ESV)

Jesus promises that if we publicly acknowledge Him as Lord, He will acknowledge us before the Father God in heaven:

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (Matthew 10:32, ESV)

And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, (Luke 12:8, ESV)

That’s great news, because God stands by His promise to save you, change you, and stay with you. God’s promise applies, no matter who you are or what you’ve done. Saying yes to Jesus is accepting the salvation He freely gives. Being saved by Jesus means you’ve been rescued. Going public is about showing on the outside how God is changing you on the inside. And He is only getting started with you. The best is yet to come!

Does Being Baptized Mean All Your Problems Are Fixed?

No. But you have taken the first real step toward a redeemed and truly blessed life! You make a public statement of your faith when you are baptized. Then you get to walk with Jesus as a continued daily “yes,” affirming to God, yourself, and those around you that you have been made new and are continually being renewed. The difference now is that you aren’t trying to build up yourself; you’re built up by Jesus. And there’s more!

As we read earlier, **And Peter said to them, “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).** The Holy Spirit is our ever-present helper. Jesus has a lot to say about the

Holy Spirit in our lives, particularly in the book of John. The Holy Spirit is our advocate, our encourager, our helper. It was the Holy Spirit who first showed you your need for salvation, and it is the Holy Spirit who helps you be a Christ-follower for the rest of your life. God wants you to have real victory in your life, but He never meant for you to struggle alone. That is why He has provided the Holy Spirit, and fellow believers.

When you are baptized, you are saying “yes” to Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit to help you be a committed Christ-follower. So even though all your problems aren’t fixed in an instant, you are far better off and well on your way to a life of victory. And no matter what happens, you can have peace in Jesus:

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The Bible promises that the same God who saved you is the God who sustains and rescues you.²

A life with Jesus is a life of continual growth. It’s a life of next steps. With the help of the Holy Spirit and each other, the more we grow in the Lord, the more we become a reflection of Jesus. And a life that reflects Him, regardless of what is going on around us, keeps getting better!

So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image. (2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT)

Sometimes we change in a moment, but often it takes time. Be patient, trusting in God’s perfect timing and provision. Our lives won’t instantaneously be cleaned up and easy, but that’s not the point—a relationship with Jesus is the point! Our public step in baptism is just the beginning of the changes God will bring to us.

Why Do We Celebrate When You Are Baptized?

When you accepted Jesus’ gift of salvation, God adopted you as His child. The church is a family of believers who wants to welcome you the same way a new baby is welcomed into this world by his parents.

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no

longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself

being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by^[b] the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18-22)

Following Jesus isn't something we're meant to do alone. The Church is a community here to encourage you, pray for you, and help you discover your next steps. It's the church's job to help you walk out your Christian life and to disciple you. Here at Lake Effect Church that means that we are committed to helping you know God, find freedom, discover purpose, and make a difference.

It's okay if some of your family and friends don't understand your choices to follow Jesus and be baptized. As you keep taking steps in your walk with Jesus, those people in your life will see the changes God is making in you. One of the best ways to keep celebrating God's goodness is by sharing the story of how Jesus is changing you.

Regardless of your past or your present, you have a place where you belong. You are a part of God's family and He's only getting started with you. Now that's worth celebrating.

¹ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3, ESV)

² even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. (Isaiah 46:4, ESV)

(For further study, please see "After You've Been Baptized, What's Next?" available upon request or at www.LakeEffect.church/baptism-whats-next/)