

What is baptism?

An individual's Act of Obedience

Baptism is the public commitment a believer makes to Jesus Christ and His people. Baptism is an individual's declaration of his or her dedication to love and obey Christ as a whole-life response to the gift of salvation He has provided. Baptism points to our union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, resulting in the conquering and defeat of death (Colossians 3:1–4). By undergoing baptism, the Christian is stating publicly that he accepts and acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of his or her life.

Baptism is biblically mandated for us in Matthew 28:20, when followers of Christ are told to *baptize* people in addition to teaching them all Christ commanded. It is exemplified for us in the Book of Acts as a necessary first step of obedience for each person who places his or her faith in Christ (Acts 2:37–41; 8:36). The apostles also wrote about it often in their epistles, admonishing the Church to publicly affirm those who profess Christ.

Baptism serves as a reminder to the Christian of being rescued from our sins and being found righteous in God's sight (Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:1–3, Philippians 3:9), Christ's sacrifice on our behalf (John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4–6), and the promise that one day we will live with Him forever in Heaven (John 14:1–4, Romans 6:8–10).

The Church's Affirmation

"Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and His people, thereby uniting the believer with the church and marking him or her off from the world."¹

We believe the local church must treat baptism as a necessary ordinance in protecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and fulfilling our corporate duty as a church with Christ as our head. In the act of baptism, a believer will demonstrate to the church, friends, and family that he or she has chosen to follow Christ and obey His teachings and standard for living.

Does baptism save you?

Baptism is a necessary ordinance of the church and a command given to the apostles by Christ Himself (Matthew 28:19–20). Baptism is an opportunity to obey the command of Christ by publicly proclaiming our allegiance to Him and His Church. While baptism is an important act of obedience, neither the waters nor the act of baptism save a person, make them righteous, or cleanse them from their sin. Scripture is clear that our eternal salvation and security are based solely on what Jesus did for us, and nothing we do will impact our standing before God (Romans 10:5–11, Ephesians 2:8–9). Although baptism is not required for salvation, it is a powerful step of obedience that indicates a person's desire to follow Christ, identify with Him, and make public this life decision (Romans 6:3–5). It is a necessary proof of our inward transformation and union with Christ.

Who should be baptized?

Every person who professes Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior should be baptized. Once a person understands that Christ's death has made full payment for his sin and repents from their fleshly way of life to put their faith and trust in Christ, they are ready to be baptized (1 Peter 3:21, Acts 2:38–41). A person is saved by Christ's work alone, through faith in Him alone—but as an outward expression of that internal faith, a person should then be baptized. This public act of obedience expresses the person's desire to walk with Christ in a renewed life of commitment to Him. Any person being baptized should not be motivated by anything other than their personal understanding of the Gospel and its redemptive effects on his or her life.

¹ Jamieson, Bobby, and Jonathan Leeman. *Understanding Baptism*. Nashville, TN: B & H, 2016. 6. Print. *ibid*.

Who should do the baptizing?

Scripture provides no prescription for who can perform a baptism. Therefore, we allow any believer who has been baptized to perform a baptism at Grace Chapel. Our pastors and elders oversee the baptisms to ensure they are conducted in an orderly and edifying manner. We do ask those who are being baptized to identify someone who has had a meaningful spiritual influence on their life to participate in their baptism, which might include the person who brought them to Christ, shared the Gospel, disciplined them, or has been a spiritual mentor. Sometimes this is a pastor, sometimes a friend, sometimes a Bible study leader, and many times it is a family member. At the time of baptism, our practice is for a pastor or elder to ask a few simple questions of the person being baptized to allow for a clear profession of faith in Jesus Christ before immersion.

How should one be baptized?

We believe that evidence from the New Testament and the practice of the early Church has always been to baptize believers through immersion in water. When Jesus was baptized, He “came up out of the water” (Mark 1:10), and when Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38–39). The Greek word for baptism (*baptizo*) literally means “to immerse.” Baptism by immersion best represents the believer’s union with Christ in His death and burial and being raised with Christ to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:3–4).

We celebrate baptism together as the gathered Body of Christ in our Sunday gatherings. While there may be some instances where only a portion of the body of believers at Grace Chapel is present, we strive to keep baptisms as collective of an act of the church as possible. Our gathered time of celebration allows for the encouragement of the body and the evangelistic impact that comes from hearing Gospel transformation stories through testimonies. We highly encourage a testimony with baptism; a person can read their testimony or simply answer the questions confirming their faith and trust in Christ.

We understand there are some people for whom immersion is not practical due to physical limitations, and we make alternate arrangements in such cases.

When should a person be baptized?

Scripture is clear that a person should be baptized following his or her credible conversion to new life in Christ. We do not find evidence in Scripture for a delay between the time a person puts their faith in Christ, repents of their sins, and baptism. Practically, we ask that each person who desires to be baptized meet with one of our church leaders so we can confirm the Gospel’s impact on his or her life, hear their testimony of putting faith in Christ, and help him or her prepare for baptism.

Scripture primarily describes the baptism of adults coming from non-Christian backgrounds, which leaves the age at which a person is baptized to be a matter of Christian discernment. A person should be baptized when they have put their faith in Jesus, are not dependent upon their parents or under their compulsion, but rather are able to make their own decisions. We simply want to know that young people have saving faith in Jesus Christ and are choosing to be baptized of their own free will. We want to ensure the legitimacy of their public profession of Christ at the time of their baptism to protect the Gospel, the person, and the church.

Should a person be baptized more than once?

Just as a person is saved once when they put their faith and trust in Christ, we believe that one baptism as a believer should be the normal pattern. If a person was baptized prior to putting their faith in Christ, such as when they were a young child, they should be baptized when they become a believer. Baptism is, however, a symbol of identifying with Christ’s death and resurrection, union with Christ, and new life in Christ, and rebaptism does not weaken this symbolism. If a person would like to experience believers’ baptism again after a previous baptism, we ask that they meet with a pastor or elder to ensure we clearly understand the reason for it.

Is baptism required for membership?

A believer's conversion and baptism set them apart from the world and aligns them with the other believers in the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–13). As the local church body, this *setting apart* by the act of baptism with the Body of Christ is one of the ways we define church membership, as modeled in the New Testament. Believers who seek to become members of Grace Chapel must have taken the step of obedience in believers' baptism. While we do not perform baptisms at Grace Chapel by any means other than immersion, any believers' baptism (e.g. sprinkling or pouring) would qualify as a baptism for the purposes of church membership as long as it occurred after the person's conversion and included a clear and credible public declaration of faith.

The relationship between Baptism and Communion

Scripture presents a consistent pattern: belief in Christ, public identification with Him through baptism, and ongoing participation in the Lord's Supper and the life of the local church. (Acts 2:38–42; 1 Cor. 11:23–26). Baptism serves as the God-ordained sign of entry into the visible church and marks one's public profession of faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper, by contrast, is the covenant meal that continually nourishes and affirms our ongoing union with Christ and fellowship within His body. This biblical sequence—from conversion to baptism to communion—reflects the gospel order itself: regeneration, public identification, and sustained participation in the covenant community of Christ's church. Therefore, baptism should precede communion, as it is the proper doorway into full participation in church life. At Grace Chapel, we joyfully invite all baptized believers in Jesus Christ to join us at His Table, while lovingly urging any unbaptized believers to follow Christ soon in this act of obedience, that their communion with us might flow from the covenant sign that properly marks their entrance into the local Church.