

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

We practice baptism by immersion under water, the way Jesus was baptized, and according to the commands of scripture.

For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ... Col. 2:12 (GN)

Why should I be baptized?

- To follow the example set by Christ

Why was Jesus baptized? In order to save Him? No, Jesus didn't need to be saved. He was perfect. Baptism doesn't save you. It is a symbol of obedience.

*At that time **Jesus** came from Nazareth and **was baptized** by John in the river. Mark 1:9*

- Because Christ commands it

These are the three things the church is commanded to do: make disciples (help people come to know Christ), baptize them, and help them grow up spiritually. Many people think, "I'll be baptized after I know about the Christian life; after I've grown up." But baptism is the action that immediately follows the decision to surrender to Christ.

Jesus said, "Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt. 28:19-20

- It demonstrates that I'm really a believer

Baptism doesn't make you a believer — it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring — it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart. Baptism says to the world, "I'm not ashamed to tell the whole world what's happened to me. I've given my life to Christ."

*...many of the people who heard Him **believed and were baptized**. Acts 18:8*

We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. 1 John 2:3

What is the meaning of baptism?

Baptism does two things:

1. It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection.

At One Life we baptize the way they did in the Bible -- putting people all the way under the water. It is a symbol of a burial and resurrection. Just like Jesus Christ died and was buried in the ground for three days and then rose again.

*Christ died for our sins... He was buried...and He rose again. 1 Cor. 15:3-4
For when you are **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.

In the Bible, there was no such thing as a person claiming to be a Christian and not be baptized. It was automatic. You were baptized as soon as you gave your life to Christ.

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

Again, the act of baptism does not make you a Christian, it shows you already believe.

When should you be baptized? As soon as you become a believer, or as soon as you realize its importance. Maybe you've been a believer for a while but you didn't realize how important it was. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." In Acts it says those who believed were baptized that day.

Philip began with the scripture and told him the good news about Jesus and as they traveled along the road they came to some water and the man said, "Look! Here's 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 he went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:35-38

There's nothing special about the water in our baptismal pool. The water in the pool is not holy, neither was the cattle trough or the pools we've used. What is holy is the faith of the people. It's not *where* you're baptized. It's *why* you're baptized -- to publicly say, "I am a consenting follower of Christ." There's no reason to delay. After you've decided to receive Christ you ought to be baptized.

Why should I be baptized by immersion?

There are many ways people baptize. There are some churches that sprinkle a little water on your forehead. Some pour water. Some dip a little bit. Why do we believe and practice at One Life that you should be baptized by immersion? Four reasons:

1. Jesus was baptized that way.

Jesus asked John the Baptist to baptize him in the river, setting the example. *"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water."* Matthew 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

3. That's what the word means. "Baptize" literally means "dip under water." The Greek word *"baptize"* means "to dip under water."

4. It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection. The founders of denominations agree.

Martin Luther (Lutherans): *"I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed as the word imports and the mystery signifies."*

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

John Wesley (Methodists): *"Buried with Him" alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church: 628: *"Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life. 'We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'" Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12; Eph 5:26]* 1239: *"... Baptism is performed in the most expressive way by immersion in the baptismal water."*

Even Catholics admit that other modes of baptism came much later in history. *"Immersion brings out more fully the meaning of baptism and that for twelve centuries it was the common practice."* St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III., Q. 66, art. 7.

Who should be baptized?

Every person who's believed in Christ.

*Those who **believed** 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*

At One Life, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. There is only one qualification in the Bible to be baptized: you've got to believe in Christ.

There are many churches that practice the *baptism of confirmation*. 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 confession of faith. This custom only began about 300 years after the Bible was finished. This tradition is different than the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those old enough to believe.

We have people on our staff who have been re-baptized. Those who were baptized as children or babies recognize it was very significant for their parents, but have no memory of it themselves. Their decision to be baptized as adults confirms the desires of their parents that they would be devoted to Christ. When they got older and they surrendered to Christ personally and said, "I want to be baptized the way Jesus commanded, and set the example." This is not a baptism of confirmation but a baptism of confession. It says, "I want the world to know I'm a follower of Christ."

Some have been baptized by other methods of baptism like sprinkling. Again, re-baptism does not invalidate or take away from a prior experience.

There is something about surrendering yourself to being lowered under water and getting wet in front of people that can cause a feeling of embarrassment. Some people won't get baptized because they don't want to get their hair wet. It's not easy or comfortable. There is a personal cost involved. That's why baptism is not just a symbol. It the first act of discipleship: dying to self, living for Christ.

Baptism is an advertisement for Jesus. It's saying, "I'm not ashamed of Jesus Christ." Jesus once said,

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26 (NIV)

At One Life, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were “confirmed” as children.

- Jesus commanded the church to do it. He said, "Go baptize." In the Bible there's no such thing as a Christian who hasn't been baptized.
- It's a symbol that your body is a member of the body of Christ. *1 Corinthians 12:13*
- It's an act of humility and submission to God and His Word.
- Although we all come from different backgrounds and traditions, we are now part of one spiritual family.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Eph. 4:4-6

The bottom line: Surrendering to being baptized by immersion comes from a humble desire to truly identify with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection.

FAQs

Can my family be baptized together?

Yes. If each family member understands the full meaning of baptism and has become a Christian, we encourage families to be baptized all at one time. Younger children who wish to be baptized are asked to have a meeting with the Leader of Family ministries for a pre-baptism conversation. In simple terms, baptism is explained so children can understand.

Can I be baptized privately?

Yes. You may have a special circumstance which needs a private baptism. We would be happy to do that for you. For instance, if you have a phobia about water. We've had folks who've had cancer treatments and are wearing a wig or hairpiece and they're afraid it's going to fall off. We are understanding and sympathetic. Please call one of our pastors and arrange a private baptism.

Is it OK to be baptized more than once?

Yes. We often have an instance where a spouse accepts Christ and they and their previously baptized spouse decide to be baptized together. This is perfectly acceptable. It is not uncommon to be baptized again as a reaffirmation of faith.