



**WATER
BAPTISM**

WATER BAPTISM

If you're reading this there's a good chance you're interested in getting baptized; or, at the very least, you're curious about baptism. If so, you're on the right track. In this small booklet, we hope to answer questions like: What is baptism? Why do we do it? In addition to some basic teaching, this booklet also contains FAQs and a guide to getting baptized here at Victory Church. We're so excited about what God is doing in your life that has led you to considering this important step in your walk of faith. We want to make this step an easy one!

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THE TEACHING

Once you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, baptism is the next step in your spiritual journey. If you've never been baptized there's no reason to wait any longer. Or, if you're like a lot of people who were baptized or christened as an infant, then we encourage you to get re-baptized. In either case, you may be wondering, "Why?" And that's a good question.

In order to fully answer this, it would be beneficial to understand the origin and true meaning of water baptism. You see, while the early church held to this sacred practice, it's significance was altered and greatly diminished over time – to the point that, in today's culture, it has nearly been lost completely. We, however, believe that it is still vital to us today, and here's why:

Very early in the Gospels, before Jesus' ministry began, we read of John the Baptist, who earned this name when he began baptizing other individuals in the River Jordan. While preaching a message of repentance and turning back to God, he invited his followers to humble themselves and undergo this baptism in water to signify and physically demonstrate that they were washing away their old lifestyle and accepting the message that John preached.

Then we read that Jesus Himself came forward to endorse this and was baptized by John! By this, Jesus made a public demonstration and declaration of His intent to follow the Father. As He was getting baptized, we read, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and the Father publically endorsed Him as His own Son, even expressing His pleasure in His Son's obedience. This became a turning point in Jesus' life. It was only after this moment that we began to see Jesus teaching with authority and doing miracles in His ministry.

Later, in His last moments with His disciples, Jesus encouraged

them to continue this practice (Matthew 28:18-19). In doing so, He signified the importance to every believer to submit to water baptism. This illustrates to us that it is far more than an empty tradition or legality. Rather, it holds the same meaning today that it did the day Jesus Himself was baptized. It continues to stand as a line of demarcation, particularly for the new believer, between the old and the new. It is a public demonstration and declaration of an individual's faith in Jesus and his or her desire to follow Him. Because of this, baptism is still meaningful and pleasing to the Father today!

Now, it should be obvious that it is impossible for an infant to grasp this significance. The decision to get baptized must be made consciously after you have received salvation and been "born again" by making Jesus Christ Lord of your life. This is why we encourage those who have been baptized or christened as infants to be re-baptized after consciously accepting Christ.

Also, we want to make sure that you know that **you don't have to be perfect to get baptized**. Water baptism is not a claim to perfection, nor will it make you perfect. Rather, it is a statement of faith, submission and willingness to allow Him to perfect us. It is a watershed moment, just as it was in Jesus' life. Sometimes we have experiences that allow us to look back and say, "Ever since then, things have changed." Can you recall a landmark point in your life? Well, getting baptized in water can be one of those moments for you as well.

Those who have been meaningfully baptized often recount the sense of going down with the old and coming up with the new; remembering what it meant in their heart as they stood there and told what God had done for them and who Jesus was in their life; feeling the forgiveness of God was over them as they went down; seeing themselves as a new person when they came back up. It's often one of the defining moments in people's walk with Jesus that they can point back to.

“ONCE YOU HAVE ACCEPTED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR, BAPTISM IS THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY. IF YOU’VE NEVER BEEN BAPTIZED, THERE’S NO REASON TO WAIT ANY LONGER.”

If you haven't been baptized since truly committing your life to Christ, you need to get baptized. It doesn't matter how long you have been saved. Consider these examples:

ACTS 2:38, 41 NIV *“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Notice that it doesn’t say that the men went home and changed. They were immediately obedient, and went straight to the water to be baptized.*

ACTS 16:29-33 NIV *“The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Notice the word, “immediately.”*

ACTS 8:35-38 NIV *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled 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.” He didn’t want to wait. He didn’t want to change his clothes! He said, “I believe in Jesus and I want the next step! Why shouldn’t I be baptized?”*

If you have accepted Jesus as Lord, but have never been baptized, let me ask you the same question: “Why shouldn’t you be baptized?” What is keeping you from standing before others and saying, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I want to put my old way of living aside so that He can live through me.”?

If you have been baptized in some form or another previously, let us restate that baptism should be done:



By immersion



By those who have made a conscious decision to submit their lives to Jesus



By those who understand the statement they’re making

If all three of these elements weren’t present when you were baptized, you should be baptized again.

ARE YOU READY?

If you now desire to be baptized, then this is what you will be declaring by your participation:

-  **I am declaring** my allegiance to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I am disassociating from my old lifestyle, symbolically burying it by going down under the water.
-  **I associate** myself with the message and person of Jesus Christ and wish to identify myself as one of His followers. I desire to show others that my heart is committed to Him, as signified by the fact that it is a public demonstration.
-  **I declare** that I will fully yield myself to Jesus and to the Spirit of grace and fully immerse myself in His truth. I desire to know Him, love Him and obey Him, allowing Him to overtake my life – as symbolized by being fully immersed (as opposed to sprinkled) in water.

If you're in agreement with these statements and understand the significance of this act, then you're ready to get baptized. And, like we said above, we're excited for you! Read on to find out what to do from here.

WATER BAPTISM GUIDELINES

PREPARATION

Prior to being baptized, you need to have read this booklet and filled out the Water Baptism Registration Form online at victoryatl.com/baptism.

CLOTHING REQUIREMENTS

Women

- Full underwear with a close inner garment such as a T-shirt
- All participants should wear the provided Water Baptism T-shirt over your undershirt or T-shirt
- Dark color shorts or pants

Men

- Underwear and T-shirt
- All participants should wear the provided Water Baptism T-shirt over your undershirt or T-shirt
- Dark color shorts or pants

THINGS YOU'LL NEED TO BRING

- Toiletries (i.e., comb or brush)
- Complete change of clothing

PHOTOS & VIDEO

Pictures and/or videotaping by friends and family are allowed and recommended. The sanctuary cameras are only used for projection on the large screens; therefore, please note that **we do not provide copies of videos or pictures for the Water Baptism ceremony.**

NOTE: Registration for Water Baptism in the main building Sanctuary is for adults only – those 18 years or older. Requests for baptism of youth 12 years or older may be made through The Capitol or The City student ministries.

FAQS



What is baptism?

Baptism literally means to be immersed. Water Baptism is a physical act of conscious obedience by which a person identifies himself or herself with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; symbolizes the death of his or her old self and resurrection to a new life in Christ; and publically declares his or her faith and trust in Jesus Christ.



Who should get baptized?

Every follower of Christ should get baptized.



What if I got baptized as an infant or child?

Unless you consciously submitted yourself to God and were aware of the significance of baptism and statement you were making by being baptized at the time you were baptized, you should be re-baptized. Infant and child baptism usually has more to do with the faith of the parents than that of the child.



Do I have to get baptized immediately after accepting Christ?

In the New Testament, many people were baptized immediately after accepting Christ; however, there are some examples of believers who weren't baptized until a while later (most notably the Apostle Paul). Still, baptism is not something to be put off indefinitely. If we are true believers who want to follow Christ, then we will want to follow his example and get baptized as soon as possible.



Am I still a Christian if I don't get baptized?

Yes. We are saved through faith in Jesus – His shed blood, death and resurrection – not through baptism. Still, if we truly

believe, we will follow Christ's example and biblical command by getting baptized. It is an act of obedience and a declaration of trust that flows out of God's work of salvation in our hearts.



Do I have to get baptized in a certain place or in a certain way?

No. Whether you get baptized in a formal church baptistery (as we have in our services), in a lake, stream, ocean, hot tub or water trough, it is the state of your heart that determines the validity of your baptism, not the perceived holiness of the venue or the water itself. The form is much less important than your heart's condition. In our baptisms, we seek to follow the examples we are given in the New Testament. That is why we baptize by fully immersing and in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and specifically, in Jesus' name.



Can I get re-baptized?

Certainly! There is no biblical prohibition against being re-baptized and doing so may be an important step in your spiritual growth. If you do not feel the above-mentioned criteria were met in your previous baptism; or, if at some point since being baptized you have fallen away from faith in God and would like to re-declare your trust and submission to Him; or, if you feel like you have entered or are entering a new period in your life and would like to express your commitment to God's will and submission of your own will, then we encourage and invite you to get re-baptized.



Will I be expected to live a sinless life after I get baptized?

No! That's not even possible. We all struggle with sin from time to time, and we all fail at times. Until we die and go to Heaven, none of us is immune to this. The key is that when we do sin we confess it, repent of it, humbly get back up and go on trusting

that Jesus' blood has already cleansed us from all sin.



I've heard of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Is that the same as water baptism, or is that different?

Baptism in water and baptism in the Holy Spirit are not the same. Baptism in water is what is described in this booklet. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is what is first described in the second chapter of the Book of Acts in the New Testament. It is a spiritual empowerment to live the life to which God has called us and is accompanied by signs, such as speaking in other tongues, and the impartation of spiritual gifts. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is another essential part of the life of a believer. Biblical references include: Acts 1:8, 2:4, 10:44-46, 19:6, and Matthew 3:1. However, as that is not the focus of this book, if you would like to know more, we encourage you to speak with a Pastor, Small Group Leader or a member of the Prayer Team. They will be glad to answer your questions, point you in the right direction and pray with you to receive this baptism if you would like.



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