

This packet is designed to give an overview of the theological convictions on the topic of baptism. For those who wish to be baptized are asked to review the material prior to baptism.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of invisible grace. They are discernible and tangible representations of both the invisible realities of the gospel and the Spirit's application of this gospel to our lives.

With both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection and our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ.

Lifepoint Church Statement of Faith describes baptism as a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

As a symbol, baptism illustrates a number of significant realities:

1. Christ's death and resurrection
2. The disciple's union with Christ in His death and resurrection
3. The new life in which a disciple walks
4. Cleansing and washing away of sin

IS BAPTISM MERELY A SYMBOL?

It is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism is not and does not do: Though there are various ways to describe the "good news," it centers on the provision of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a substitute for our sins. He lived a perfect life, was crucified, and was raised three days later. Through faith in Him, we are united to Him and thus reconciled to God.

1. BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE. Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, it is not saving grace but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized.

2. BAPTISM IS NOT "NECESSARY" FOR SALVATION. Without in any way diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must also warn against thinking which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

MATTHEW 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

ACTS 2:37–41 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 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. 39 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.” 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACTS 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

1. To obey the commands of Christ
2. To evidence that a person is a disciple of Christ
3. To follow the example of Christ

BAPTISM AT LIFEPOINT CHURCH

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. We have the opportunity to evidence our trust in and love for our King through obedience in this ordinance. If we think of baptism as a mere burden, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in the call to be baptized. We should have a similar response as the Ethiopian eunuch who, when he believed the gospel, proclaimed, “What prevents me from being baptized?” ACTS 8:28-38

It should be our joy, and we should eagerly anticipate our participation in the ordinance. The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to glorify God in faithful obedience. Any other motivation (to join a particular local church, to please a friend or family member, etc.) should not be the ultimate reason for seeking to be baptized.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

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Lifepoint Statement of Faith begins by stating that “baptism is only intended for the individual who has received by faith the saving benefits of Christ’s atoning work and become His disciple.”

We practice what is called “believer’s” or “confessor’s” baptism, which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through Acts, we find baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing and receiving the Holy Spirit.

SHOULD A PERSON BE REBAPTIZED?

For those who were sprinkled or immersed at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not, indeed should not, be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or immersion in water before being born again and trusting Christ, your experience was not baptism, and thus you need to be baptized.

The question is therefore, "Was I truly trusting in Christ when I was baptized?"

There should always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the life of those who have trusted in the gospel. Believers must not be rebaptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

ACTS 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

As soon as a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a regenerate believer refrains from obedience to the ordinance. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is rather immediate. This pattern of somewhat immediate baptism should be emulated unless there are convincing reasons to delay baptism.

IMPROPER MOTIVATIONS FOR DELAYED BAPTISM:

1. FEAR

One of the most common reasons for delaying is fear, but such anxiety should not hinder our obedience. It is important to know that fear is sin and thus should not be passively accepted. Confronting sin is an essential aspect of discipleship, and a person's obedience in this area is an excellent way to begin the process of sanctification in the area of the fear of man.

2. NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH

There will never be a time where a person will be "good enough" for baptism. Our right to enter the baptismal waters is grounded upon Christ's righteousness, not our own. If we have been united to Him, we should confidently draw near in obedience to His command and example.

HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Lifepoint Church practices baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following considerations:

1. The Greek word $\beta \alpha \pi \tau \iota \xi \omega$ (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.

Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek baptizo. Baptizo was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.

2. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion. This best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing them out. In addition, it is interesting to note the use of water to symbolize judgment in the Scriptures (e.g. the flood of Genesis 6-7 and the destruction of Egypt in the Red Sea of Exodus 14). Thus, by passing through the waters of baptism, the believer expresses trust that God's judgment has been satisfied by Christ.

COLOSSIANS 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

ROMANS 6:3–4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.

The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.

MATTHEW 3:16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...

MARK 1:5, 10 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins...And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

JOHN 3:23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized...

ACTS 8:38–39 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

WHERE SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Although there are no prescriptions in the Scriptures to location, we prefer to practice the ordinance within the context of the local church in order to allow the congregation to celebrate together in a person's act of obedience and submission.

That said, we do not want to prescribe what the Scriptures do not, and thus we do allow for baptism to occur outside the weekly gathering. However, it is our preference in such cases is that video and/or pictures be taken to record the event so that the church can share in the joy.

WHO CAN PERFORM BAPTISM?

The Bible gives no prescription for the requirements to perform baptism. Contrary to some traditions, there seems to be no biblical reason to restrict the duty to men who have been ordained to vocational ministry. Therefore, we allow any believer, male or female, who has been baptized (or who is in the process of being baptized) to perform the ordinance.

PRIOR TO THE BAPTISM:

1. We ask those wishing to be baptized to review baptism packet with an appointed member with in the Lifepoint Church body in which we explain the gospel, core Christian beliefs (articulated in our "Statement of Basic Beliefs") and Lifepoint Church theology of baptism.
2. With in the review, we ask for participants to share a testimony of conversion in which we look particularly for evidences of grace and a proper understanding of the gospel. For instance, we want to make sure a person does not articulate that he or she was born a Christian or thinks that Christianity consists merely in moral improvement.

BAPTISM SERVICES:

Celebration services are regularly scheduled services in which we baptize and receive the Lord's Supper.

1. We have regular celebration services in which the church celebrates baptisms together. We encourage those wishing to be baptized to do so within the context of these gatherings.
2. Facilitators share their personal testimonies if possible.
3. After the testimony, the person performing the baptism will ask, "Do you confess and believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?" to which the baptizee will respond, "Yes" or "I do."
4. The baptizer will then immerse and subsequently raise the baptizee out of the water while saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

[Some will choose to also say, "Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life" which is taken from Romans 6:4 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.]

Following the formula of Matthew 28:19, we baptize using the Trinitarian confession.

HELPFUL HINTS:

1. Wear dark shorts and a dark shirt to maintain modesty.
2. Bring a change of clothes, towel and bag to hold your wet clothes after you change.
3. A row of seats will be reserved for everyone who is being baptized, but if you prefer to sit with visiting family and friends, ask them to save you a seat near the baptistery.
4. Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service where you are being baptized. You will receive an email the week before with further details on when and where to arrive.

BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP

Baptism is a requirement for membership at Lifepoint Church. We require anyone wishing to join the church to have displayed obedience to Christ's command following conversion. While we practice a baptism by immersion, we do not require the mode of immersion for membership. If a person was sprinkled or immersed (or a possible other mode) after conversion, he or she has met our requirement for membership.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CREDOBAPTISM – the view that only those who have been regenerated and trust Christ as Lord and Savior should be baptized, also known as believer's or confessor's baptism

PAEDOBAPTISM – the view that infants of believing parents should be baptized

IMMERSION – a mode or form of baptism in which the baptizee is submerged under the water

SPRINKLING – a mode or form of baptism in which the baptizee is sprinkled with water, also known as effusion or pouring

REGENERATED – to be “born again,” regeneration refers to the event in which God grants new life to His children, and they subsequently exercise faith and love toward Him

JUSTIFICATION – the term for the declaration of righteousness that God credits to our account. It is often distinguished from “sanctification”

SANCTIFICATION – a progressive work of God in which believers are continually conformed to the image of Jesus Christ