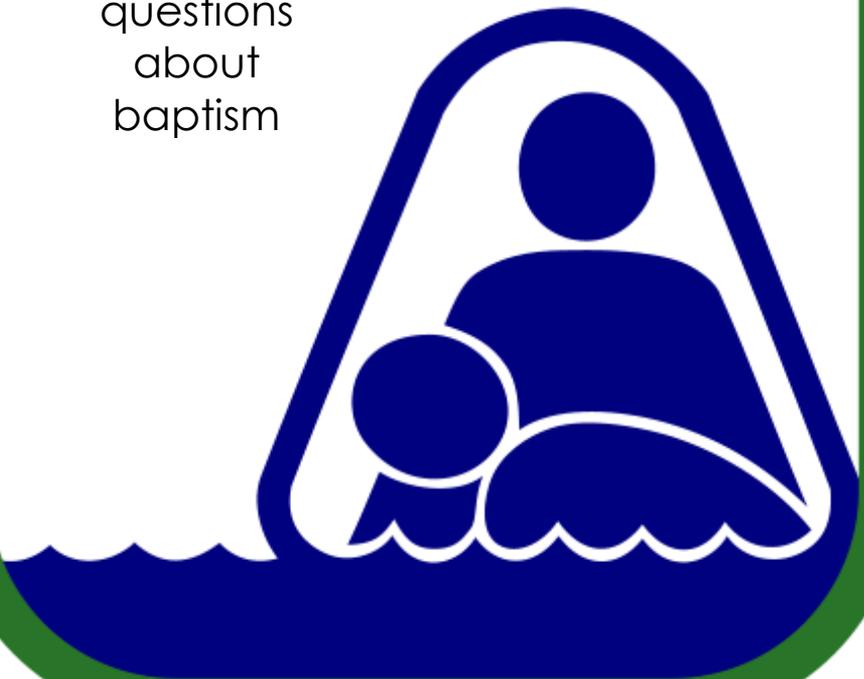


# Why Baptism?

## Why Me?

Answers to  
common  
questions  
about  
baptism





# What is baptism?

The word **Baptism** actually comes from the Greek word *Baptizo*. In Greek it means: *To submerge or plunge or immerse some thing or someone under the water.*

Baptism is the simple physical act of being gently lowered backwards until you are totally submerged under water, and then immediately raised back up to a standing position.

Baptism has come to refer to a ceremony that churches use when a person decides to become a Christian. (They accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their Savior as well as commit to follow Him as their Lord/Leader)





## Why is baptism important for me?

Each of us must make our own decision about Jesus. It is not something done for us by our family, our parents or our spouse.

If our commitment to Jesus is genuine and without reservation, baptism is a clear and decisive way we show Christ we are serious about our faith. Look at this example of an Ethiopian official traveling back to Africa from Israel:

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 man said, "Look, here is water. Why can'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 they went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:35-38





# What is the real meaning of baptism?

When we are baptized, just like those who came to John the Baptist in the Jordan River, we are admitting our sinfulness: we have done wrong. As we are baptized we are confessing this to God and asking for His forgiveness. (**Matthew 3**)

Baptism is also how we physically express our commitment to Jesus. We confess our faith with our mouths and we live out our faith in our baptism. (**...all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 3:27**)

It is one of the first ways we can show other people that we are committing ourselves to follow Jesus as our Savior and the Leader of our lives. Like a wedding ceremony shows everyone our love for our spouse, baptism shows everyone our love and commitment to Christ.

Our immersion under water clearly illustrates how the blood of Jesus washes us clean from the guilt of our sins. (**...be baptized and wash away your sins... Acts 22:16**)

Baptism is also a powerful illustration of how we die to our old life and experience a "resurrection" into a new life here and now. (**We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... we too may live a new life. Romans 6:4**)





# How do you know if you are ready for baptism?

To answer this question, it is important to remember that baptism is a birth, not a graduation. Baptism is an action that shows our commitment to Christ. The rest of our lives will be filled with learning more and more about faith, Jesus, the Bible, and the Christian life.

If you understand that you are a sinner and that no amount of good things you may do will make you deserving of entrance into God's Heaven...

If you want Jesus to be your Savior, to rely on His death as payment for your "sin debt" so that you can be forgiven by God... (Grace)

If you truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and are willing to follow Him as the Leader (Lord) of your life...

**THEN** you are ready to be baptized!  
Congratulations!





# What should you expect when you are baptized?

What should you wear?

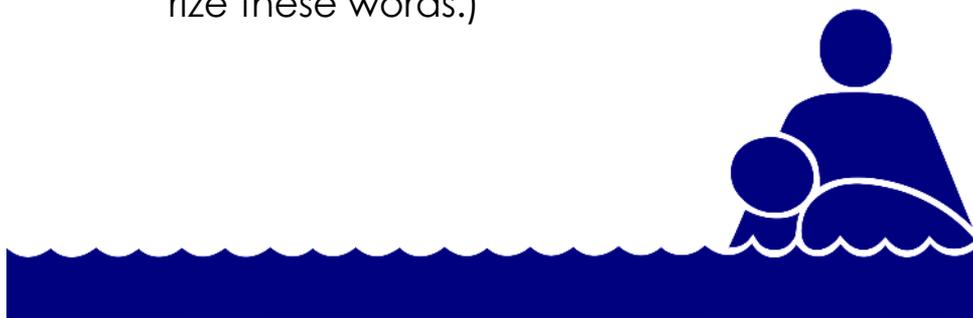
Shorts and a t-shirt or top are best. Bring a change of clothes and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. You may also want to bring whatever you need for your hair.

Will I have to say anything?

You will be introduced and prayed for by the person baptizing you. Right before your actual immersion you will be asked to repeat the “Good Confession” first given by Peter. ([Matthew 16:16](#))

“I believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and I accept Him as my personal Lord and Savior.”

(The person baptizing you will prompt you for this, you don't need to memorize these words.)



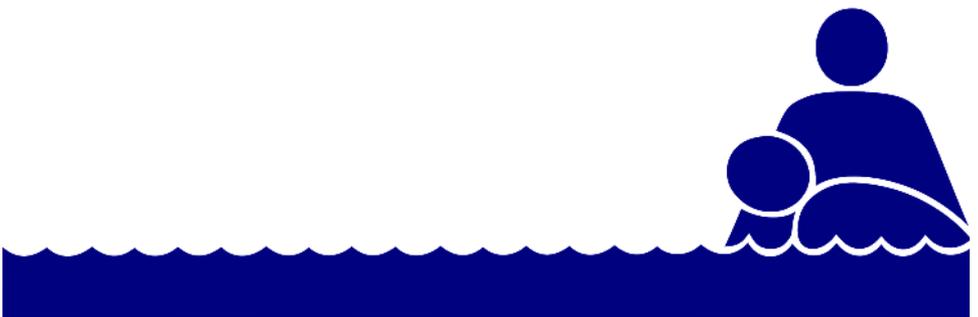
Is that all?

After your confession of faith,  
you will be immersed

“In the name of the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (The person baptizing you will say these words.)  
Once you are raised back up to a standing position, your baptism is complete! You will leave the baptistery and someone will be waiting for you with fresh towels.

Who will baptize me?

Any Christian can baptize someone. It is especially meaningful if you choose whomever has been most influential in bringing you to this point in your spiritual life. It may be a pastor or teacher or family member or friend.



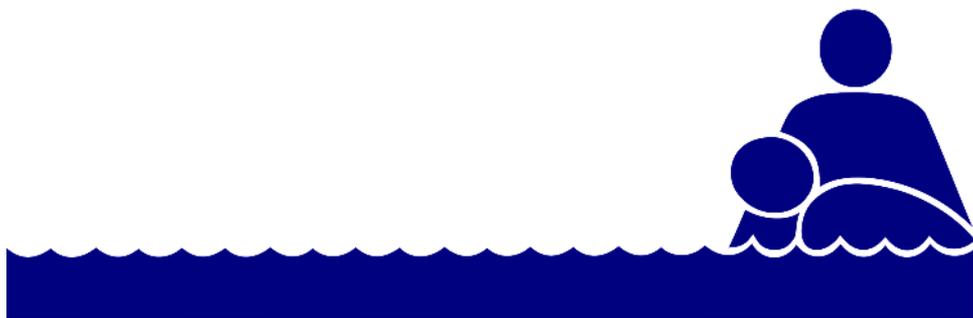


# Is there a controversy around baptism?

If you read only the New Testament, you would never think there would be any disagreement about baptism. Jesus was baptized. He baptized others. As the apostles started the Church, the new believers were baptized; one consistent picture.

Unfortunately, 2,000 years of church history have left us with a variety of opinions and teachings about baptism – which has created controversy.

Yet different opinions don't change the clear picture that originally baptism was part of the normal process people followed to become a Christian. It is what Jesus not only did Himself, but what He told His followers to do. (...go and make disciples... baptizing them... Matthew 28:18-20)





# Why immersion baptism?

As stated under Question #1, the word **Baptism** means *to immerse*. It is not a theological word, but a practical verb where some thing or someone is submerged in water.

This understanding is confirmed by the practice of the Greek Orthodox Church. While they baptize infants, they do so with immersion baptism because their Bibles are written in the original Greek and the meaning of baptism as immersion is clear.

Immersion is the baptism Jesus would have experienced at the hands of John the Baptist. Jewish baptism has always been by immersion – it is a complete washing. Orthodox Jewish synagogues to this day use immersion baptism for new converts.

Immersion perfectly fits the symbolism of baptism, intended to communicate 1) a complete washing away of sin by the blood of Jesus, and 2) our death to the old life and resurrection to a new life.

(Romans 6)



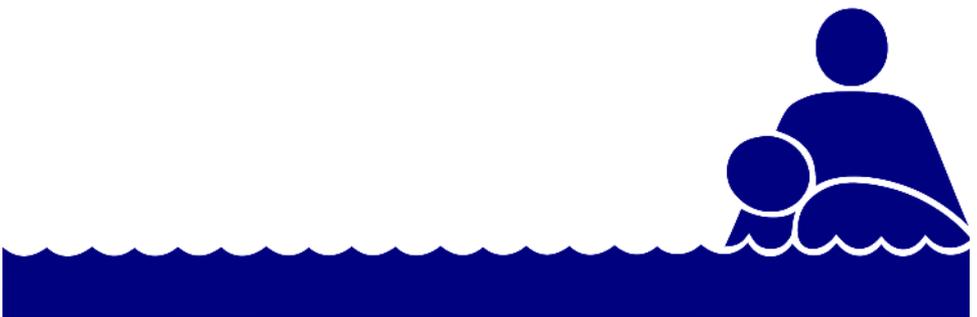
Pouring and sprinkling as different methods of baptism were added at different points in church history, for different practical reasons. No credible New Testament scholar would advocate for sprinkling or pouring as the original form of baptism.

Church leaders throughout history have acknowledged that immersion is the original, intended form of baptism:

Martin Luther: "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the work imports and the mystery signifies."

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

John Wesley: "Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."





# What about infant baptism?

Because baptism is something we do to express our inner faith / belief in Jesus and our commitment to follow Him as our Lord, baptism needs to happen when someone is old enough to understand these concepts and is fully aware of the commitment they are making. Baptism also needs to be an act we choose to do. No one can make a commitment to God for us.

The baptism of infants is a practice that evolved in church history because of a particular teaching championed by Augustine. (Approx. 350-400 A.D.) He taught that the guilt of sin is inherited by humans. (Previous to this, it was taught that we inherited only a tendency towards sinning.) Augustine's teaching implied that babies would be sent to Hell because of the sins of their ancestors. As a result it was decided that infants need to be baptized – and so infant baptism began.



Contradicting Augustine, the Bible says clearly that God will NOT judge anyone based on the sins of their parents or their children. We will each be held accountable for only our own actions. (Ezekiel 18:17–20) So a child, who does not even know right from wrong, is by definition sinless. If they die, they will go to Heaven as a sinless person.

If a person was baptized as an infant, this is not a bad thing. Their parents wanted them to be saved and to become a Christian. However, this should not be confused with immersion baptism as taught in the New Testament. It is always exciting to see believers decide to experience their “second baptism” as they make their own choice to be buried with Christ in the waters of immersion baptism.

