

Being Baptized

At The Harbor Church, it is a membership requirement that every member have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated by emersion after they come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ even though many of us were “confirmed” or “sprinkled” as children. We want to make it very clear that Baptism by emersion 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 have made in your heart. Here are the reasons for this Biblical requirement of Baptism by emersion after conversion.

To follow the example set by Jesus. Jesus was baptized that way.

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.” Mark 1:9 (NIV)

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.” Matthew 3:16 (NIV)

To follow what Christ commands.

(Jesus) *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age...”* Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

To demonstrate to the world that I really am a believer.

“...[M]any of the Corinthians who heard Him believed and were baptized.” Acts 18:8 (NIV)

“We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.” 1 John 2:3 (NIV)

It illustrates Christ’s death and resurrection.

“Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He was raised on the third day...” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NIV)

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

Because it best symbolizes a burial and resurrection.

The founders of various denominations agree:

Martin Luther (Lutheran)... “I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”

John Calvin (Presbyterian)... “The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. Immersion was undoubtedly the practice of the ancient church.”

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John Wesley (Methodist)... “Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”

It illustrates my new life as a Christian.

“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:4 (NIV)

According to the ancient language, every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

(For example) “...[T]hen 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 (LB)

The word “Baptize” comes from the Greek word “baptizo” which means “to dip under or immerse in water.”

When should I be baptized?

Many people ask when they should be baptized. The simple answer is as soon as you have believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. “Those who believed...were baptized...that day!” Acts 2:41 (LB)

“Then Philip began with the 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 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 they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.” Acts 8:35-38 (LB)

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are “perfect,” you’ll never feel “good enough!”

How do I sign up to be baptized?

Check out the website or our bulletin for upcoming baptism dates and indicate on the communication card in our bulletin your interest in being baptized. You can also call the office at 813.920.9922 or email the church at office@theharborfl.org if the dates don’t fit your schedule.

Where does the baptism take place?

Ideally, the baptisms are done at one of our beautiful beaches here in the Tampa Bay Area. We also do baptisms in pools. Please indicate your preference.

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What should I wear to my baptism?

We ask you to wear a swimsuit and a t-shirt for your baptism. Make sure to bring towels and extra clothes for after the baptism.

Who will perform my baptism?

The Harbor Church pastors and ministry leaders can perform the baptism for you. Parents are encouraged to baptize their children. The Bible does not say, "Only Pastors are permitted to baptize people." You can ask those who have had the most significant influence on your faith to help in the baptism. Just tell the pastor leading the baptism that day who you would like to help or perform your baptism. The Pastor will gladly show the people you choose what to do.

What will happen at the baptism?

You will be asked to tell everyone at your baptism why you are taking this step of faith before you enter the water. As you enter the water, those leading the baptism will pray over you and ask you two simple questions:

1. Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, died on a cross, and rose from the dead to pay the penalty of your sins?
2. Do you believe that the only way to eternal life in heaven is by believing in Jesus Christ alone as Savior and Lord?

After you have answered "yes" to both questions, the person leading the baptism will then say, "Through your public profession of faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." At that time, they will quickly dip you underwater and bring you up out of the water. At that moment, the person leading the baptism will ask you to say loudly and boldly, "Jesus is Lord!" That statement is a public declaration to the world that you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ alone. In early church history, Christ-followers would come out of the water making this same declaration. Many of those would be immediately arrested (if they were Roman citizens) or immediately imprisoned or executed (if not Roman citizens). Their testimony was indeed a life and death decision. This declaration is to remind us of all of those who were and still are being martyred for their faith.