

## BAPTISM: A NEXT STEP IN FOLLOWING CHRIST

### INTRODUCTION

Many elements of St. Mark's Church exist so that no matter where you are on your spiritual journey, from just starting to check things out to being a Christ-follower for decades, you can participate as much as you choose to.

Yet there are certain things that the Bible itself tells us for believers, people who have made a commitment to following Christ as best as they can. One of these is baptism. As Christ-followers, we are called by Jesus himself to be baptized, as a public proclamation of this change in our lives... and in our eternities.

Still, baptism can be a touchy topic. Many of us were baptized as babies and later confirmed as children. Isn't that enough? We have tackled tough questions like this in the following pages. If you still have questions after reading these, feel free to contact the church to speak with a pastor.

### WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

The Bible says that every person who believes in Christ should be baptized. A believer is someone who has realized that their sin has separated them from God. They have given up all personal efforts to reach God through good works or religious activity. They have concluded that Jesus Christ's death on the cross for their sins is the only thing that can bridge the gap between themselves and God. A believer is someone who has decided to trust Christ alone for salvation. If you have come to that point in your spiritual journey, then you're ready for baptism. ([Acts 2:41](#); [8:12-13](#))

### WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Baptism is a way of demonstrating publicly that a person has entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Just as a bride and groom tell of their love for one another through the symbol of rings, baptism symbolizes a person's union with Christ. While the act of baptism doesn't save a person, it does symbolize what took place in the individual's heart at the time of salvation:

- Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Forgiver/Leader). [Romans 10:9](#)
- Becoming a new person. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)
- Joining God's family (the Body of Christ) [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)

The act of baptism reminds us we have been washed clean, been given a new life and are adopted as one of God's children through faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Being placed under water illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection ([Romans 6:4](#)).

**It illustrates Christ's death, burial and resurrection.** "...Christ died for our sins... he was buried... and he rose again." ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#))

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ." ([Colossians 2:12](#))

**It illustrates your new life as a Christian.** "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 Corinthians 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 that we may live a new life!" ([Romans 6:4](#))

**Yet baptism doesn't make you a Christian.** Only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is a wedding ring; it's the outward sign of the commitment you have made in your heart. ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))

#### WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

**First and foremost, it is to follow the example set by Jesus.**

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

**In addition, Christ commanded it.** “Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all the people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you.’” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#))

**It publicly acknowledges that you are a believer, a follower of Christ.** “We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands.” ([1 John 2:3](#))

#### WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

**As soon as you can after you become a believer.**

“Those who believed were baptized that day.” ([Acts 2:41](#)) If you wait until you feel you are a “good enough” believer, you will never feel ready for baptism.

“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 of 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](#))

**Yet it doesn't have to occur the moment you believe.**

After becoming a believer, you should participate in the next available opportunity your church provides for baptism. If you wait until you feel you are a “good enough” believer, you will never feel ready for baptism.

#### HOW DO WE BAPTIZE AT ST. MARK'S?

St. Mark's offers baptism by immersion and sprinkling. While the word “Baptize” means to dip under water, there is evidence of various forms of baptism being practiced by the ancient church. At St. Mark's, we believe that a person's obedience to Christ's command to be baptized is more essential than the form or mode of baptism.

#### WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED AS AN INFANT

While St. Mark's respects and continues to practice the tradition of infant baptism, we view infant baptism as a parental decision - made on behalf of the infant - to offer their child in dedication to God. This act demonstrates the parent's intent to raise their child in a way that naturally supports them choosing to become a Christ follower when they are older. Once the person has personally placed faith in Christ, we believe the biblical next step is public baptism as a believer. If you were baptized as a child, it was the intent and hopes of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' prayers. It in no way repudiates the baptism you received as a child.