

What We Believe About Baptism

Introduction

We know that many who attend CenterPoint have come from various church backgrounds and traditions. As a result, there could be some questions about what we believe and why. This is especially true when it comes to issues that tend to be debated in churches, like the Lord's Supper and Baptism. To help you get to know us better, we've taken some time to clarify what we believe the Bible teaches on these subjects. We hope this brings you not only greater understanding on these issues alone, but an increased awareness of who God is and the incredible hope that we have in Jesus.

What is Baptism all about?

At first glance, the idea of Christian Baptism might seem strange. Where does the idea of baptism come from? Why should someone be baptized? Isn't it just an antiquated ritual? If I believe in Jesus, why isn't that good enough? Why do I have to get publicly soaked and wet? Couldn't we just use a super soaker?

We realize that the idea of baptism might seem foreign. But in the New Testament, we see that being baptized is the proper response to faith in Christ. It is an act of obedience whereby one who has put their faith in Christ publicly identifies with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is a time for us to acknowledge that we have put our faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, remembering that Jesus said "whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).

We believe it is our responsibility to baptize those who put their faith in Jesus, since His last words to his disciples were to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

We also believe it is the responsibility of one who has put their faith in Jesus to be baptized. Time and time again, the apostles urge people to believe and be baptized. In Acts 2, Peter urges the crowd to "repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). There are 10 detailed examples of conversion in the book of Acts, each of which contains a "believed and was baptized" pattern.¹ Therefore, we are convinced each Christian should respond in obedience to God by believing and being baptized.

In baptism, we remember that "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." We identify with his own death in baptism. The Apostle Paul teaches that "all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death... therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:3-4). The association of salvation and baptism in the New Testament has led some to think that it is baptism that saves. Let me clearly say, baptism does not save. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is simply the outer manifestation of faith in Christ. Like participating in the Lord's Supper, baptism is something we are called to do in obedience to Jesus.

¹ 10 Detailed Conversions in Acts: the Jews in Acts 2; the Samaritans in Acts 8:5-12; Simon in Acts 8:13; the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-40; Saul in Acts 9:1-18/22:1-16; Cornelius in Acts 10:1 - 11:18; Lydia in Acts 16:14-15; the jailer in Acts 16:25-34; the Corinthians in Acts 18:8; and the Ephesians in Acts 19:1-7).

What We Believe About Baptism

Am I ready to be baptized?

This is probably the most frequent question we hear in regard to baptism. And we think it is a good one! Since baptism is an outward declaration of an inward reality, it is important to ensure that you have put your faith in Jesus before you are baptized.

But let's make a few things really clear.

First of all, you don't have to be a Christian for a certain number of years to be baptized. You don't have to have it all together, and your faith doesn't have to reach a certain level of strength or maturity. The Bible teaches that you are ready to be baptized the moment you put your faith in Jesus and ask for forgiveness! At that moment, you are forgiven and God's grace makes you clean. You are now free to proclaim through baptism, an outward washing, the cleansing which God has already accomplished in your heart.

I was baptized as a baby, should I do it again?

We know that many wonderful Christian denominations practice infant baptism. And we know that many wonderful Christian people in our church has been baptized as infants. Of course, this raises several questions for a lot of us. It might be helpful to differentiate between the most common views on baptism.

1. **Baptismal Regeneration:** Baptism accomplishes the forgiveness of sins. All infants should be baptized in order to communicate saving grace from original sin.
2. **Covenantal Baptism:** Baptism is the oath sign of the new covenant in the same way circumcision was the oath sign under the old covenant. As a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, all infants of believing parents should be baptized.
3. **Believer's Baptism:** Baptism should follow one's profession of faith in Christ. It is an act of obedience to the command of Christ.

At CenterPoint, we believe the New Testament practice was baptism upon acceptance of the gospel (e.g. Acts 8), and is an act of obedience that should follow one's profession of faith in Christ. Therefore, we encourage everyone who was baptized as an infant to consider being baptized as an adult. In so doing, you consciously and personally identify yourself with Jesus Christ and symbolically declare in your baptism the faith you have put in Him.

Do you sprinkle or dunk?

If we were in the middle of the desert, we might have a different opinion on this. But since we are in the middle of an Island and water is plentiful, we practice full immersion. In addition to providing the imagery of being cleansed, baptism also paints the picture of one dying to oneself and being made new in Christ. Just as Jesus died and was resurrected on the third day, so will all who believe in Jesus die and be raised by the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. In the act of fully immersing someone in water, we acknowledge that in the same way one is buried with Christ, so will one also be risen in Christ. Every part of the individual is soaking wet, representing how every part of us is made brand new in Jesus Christ.

What does the Baptism service look like?

We normally start off with a welcome, especially since there are often so many family and friends who come out to share in this day with you. Each baptismal service will include a time for singing and worship, a time for those being baptized to share their faith, a brief message from a pastor, and a time when those present will be baptized (either in a Baptismal tank of a local church or at Jones Beach in the Atlantic Ocean).

What We Believe About Baptism

Do I have to say anything?

As you've noticed, we provide a time for each person share their faith before they are baptized. We believe it is important for you to publicly profess the faith you've put in Christ (Rom. 10:9). This can be as simple as you saying, "I've given my heart to Christ", or as elaborate as sharing your journey to faith in Jesus. We ask that each testimony be no longer than 5 minutes in order to accommodate everyone who might like to share their story. Also, we ask that if you do decide to share that you please be sensitive to those in attendance, and be careful not to offend or insult any church or denomination from your past. You do not want to accidentally hinder anyone else in their journey to faith in Jesus.

What should I wear?

A word on clothing. Remember that what you wear to your baptism is what you will be dunked in. A strong suggestion: Do not wear clothing that is lightly colored. Be sure that when your clothes get wet, they do not become see through!

Should I invite friends?

Absolutely! At each baptism, the good news of the gospel is clearly presented, both in what it said and what is done. So yes, we think it's a great opportunity for you to share your faith with your friends and family, and to celebrate with your loved ones what God has done in your life.

Still Have Questions?

Feel free to visit our website at www.cpchurch.com, or contact us at info@cpchurch.com. One of our pastors would be happy to talk with you further.