

Questions & Answers

(Q.) Who can baptize a new Christian?

(A.) Although not explicitly stated in Scripture, we believe the elders of the local church should be the primary ministers of this ordinance. We believe it is most proper and best for the elders to baptize new believers. The elder does not hold any mystic power, but can aid in determining one's credible profession, and it is the elder, as a church representative, who will present them to the local church.

(Q.) Does location matter?

(A.) No. However, our typical practice is to baptize new Christians during the local, weekly gathering of the saints at GFC. We do not believe it's essential to be baptized at a particular location, and we reject any notion that a specific locale or a particular body of water holds "saving" power.

(Q.) May I be baptized in a private setting?

(A.) No. Baptism is not a private action. One reason for baptism is to publicly declare that you are a new creation in Christ. We believe baptism must be open to all the members of the local body. This is, in part, why we baptize new Christians during corporate gatherings of the local church. There may be times when it's not possible to be baptized in a corporate setting, but only in exceptional circumstances.

(Q.) Do I need to be re-baptized?

(A.) Baptism is preceded by genuine faith. If someone was baptized after true conversion, that individual does not need to be 're-baptized'. If, however, an individual was not truly converted, we would encourage baptism, because in this case, they were never truly baptized. The same is true for Catholics or those who practice infant baptism. They were not baptized as born-again Christians, so we encourage them to be obedient to God and be baptized as believers.

(Q.) Does the mode of baptism matter?

(A.) Yes. We believe the Bible clearly states that full immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the proper way to be baptized.

(Q.) When can my child be baptized?

(A.) We have no set age at which to regulate baptism. At GFC we believe all men, women, and children should be clearly displaying signs of regeneration before they are baptized. There must be belief and action. With children, we desire to have them, or the parents, contact the elders to begin discussions, with the child and parent, that will help everyone further determine if the child is ready. This process will move along at a pace appropriate for the child. Sometimes this process will take a few weeks. Other times it may take longer to fully assess the child's readiness. The same process is used with adults.



Baptism



‘A GFC introductory guide to baptism’

Introduction

The elders of Grace Fellowship Church intend for this document to give a brief, biblical view of baptism, and we hope it will be a springboard for future discussions about baptism. We aim to help new Christians in their walk with Christ and create a church culture where the ordinance of baptism is meaningful in the life of the body as we proclaim our unity with Christ in his death and resurrection.

The 1689 London Baptist Confession gives this brief definition of baptism:

“Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with Him, in His death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into Him; of remission of sins and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life”

With that as our starting point, let's look at how this fleshes out in the life of the local church.

The Church's Mission

After finishing the work of redemption, Jesus sent his disciples on a mission to carry the good news to all the nations. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus declares to His disciples:

*19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; ”*

As the apostles were the foundation of the Church and all the nations have not yet been reached, we the church are to continue this work.

What does baptism mean to the church? In baptism, a church affirms a believer's profession of faith in Christ. It affirms that those who claim to be united to Christ, are united to Him, so far as the church can tell. It sets a visible, public seal on an invisible spiritual reality. The church does this by immersing the believer in water. The word for “baptize” is based on a

Greek word meaning “to dip or plunge something in water, typically resulting in full submersion.” Baptism by immersion signifies our union with Christ. In Romans 6:4 Paul says, “...we have been buried with Him through baptism into death...” Immersion physically mimics the motions of burial and resurrection, dramatically portraying our union with Christ in His own burial and resurrection.

So, the local church, under the authority and command of Christ, affirms and illustrates a believer's union with Christ by immersing them in water.

A Believer's Act

Baptism isn't just the church's act, so too, it is a believer's act. The church baptizes, while a Christian gets baptized. In Acts 2 we read from Peter's sermon at Pentecost where those listener's, under conviction, said to Peter and the Apostles “what shall we do?” Peter said “repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”

If you're a Christian, Jesus commands you to be baptized, it's something you must do; no one else can do it for you. In baptism a believer is publicly committing to Christ. Baptism is performed openly before witnesses. Those at Pentecost who stepped forward to be baptized were marking themselves as followers of Jesus. In Matthew 10:32,33 Jesus said:

“Therefore, everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”

The only way to follow Jesus is to do so openly, in plain sight, where everyone can see you. Baptism is how we declare to the church and the world that we belong to Jesus, claiming He is our Savior and submitting to Him as our Lord.

Part of the Body

Paul reminds us that “in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). At conversion we enter the body of Christ called “the church.” To trust in Jesus is to join the company of all who trust in Jesus.

So, in baptism a believer commits to both Christ and His people. Baptism is a commitment to follow Christ in the company of His Church. In baptism, Christians commit to love, serve, and submit to the people of God.

The Church makes a commitment of its own. Baptism isn't merely an opportunity for an individual believer to testify to his own faith, but also for the local church to affirm the believer's profession. In baptism the Church says to the World, “Look here! This one belongs to Jesus!” It initiates that person into the company of the church, the Bride of Christ.

The Next Step

If you have made a profession of faith, turned from your sins and trusted in Christ alone as your Savior, and come to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you should prayerfully consider baptism. We encourage everyone who desires to be baptized to spend some time examining their heart in prayer, along with friends who can speak wisely on this important step.

When you are ready to make known your desire to be baptized, please speak to one of our elders. Be ready to explain how God has brought this desire about and who has counseled you up to this point.

-the Elders of Grace Fellowship Church