



# baptism

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

### A Brief History of Baptism

Baptism comes from the Greek work *baptizo*, which means, “to dip” or “wash.” It is a ritual washing through immersion and emergence from water. Baptism is a practice that began before Jesus was born. The Jewish people believed that immersion was a symbolic washing and was required for non-Jews to be identified with the God of Israel.

During the time of Jesus’ ministry, those born of the Jewish faith did not believe that they needed baptism because they were descendants of Abraham. Then John the Baptist came. His name was a form of the same word, *baptizo*, which is used in the early parts of the Gospels to describe the rite performed by John as he called upon the people to repent that they might receive forgiveness of sins. John proclaimed that everyone was in need of cleansing from his or her sins. This was a radical statement for people to hear since they were born into the faith. To everyone’s shock, John declared everyone needed to be washed in the cleansing waters of baptism.

At Jesus’ baptism, something amazing happened: “Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:10-11). In a rare glimpse of the Trinity, Jesus hears the words each of us long to hear, namely that we are God’s beloved children. Jesus has what we want—the assurance that God loves and is pleased with us.

### So why was Jesus baptized?

Jesus was baptized as a way of identifying Himself with the people, although he was sinless in nature. Baptism is a sign and seal that we are his people—that we belong to Jesus. In his baptism, Jesus boldly states that he is

with us. He makes our story his story and is not ashamed to be counted as one of us. The book of Hebrews says, “Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters” (2:11). Jesus is the one who makes us holy, and he does so by fully identifying with us in our plight, our waywardness, and our desperate need for reconciliation.

### Why are we baptized?

In our baptism, we are fully identified with Jesus, renouncing our life of sin, embracing the life of discipleship. Our baptism witnesses to the fact that we no longer belong to sin but to Jesus. His story becomes our story, his death our death, and his resurrection our resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Just as the Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, our baptism is the sign and seal that the Spirit has been given to us who have faith in Christ, “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9b). When the Spirit descends upon us, we too become God’s beloved children: “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:14-16). Baptism is the sign and seal that we belong to Christ, and in belonging to him, the Spirit brings about our adoption as God’s beloved children. Jesus is not ashamed to be called our brother, and he gladly shares everything he has with us his siblings. Baptism, like no other event in the Christian life assures us that we are beloved of God and share in the blessings and responsibilities of being God’s child.

## Reasons for Getting Baptized

### Follow Jesus' Example and fully identify with Him

To follow the example set by JESUS.

*"Then one day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John there in the Jordan River." (Mark 1:9)*

### Obey Jesus' Command – To Obey Jesus' Command

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. And I will be with you to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19,20)*

### Show My Commitment to Follow Jesus

*"...many of the people who heard Him BELIEVED and were baptized." (Acts 18:8). "We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands." (1 John 2:3)*

Baptism is like wearing a wedding ring: **it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.**

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## The Picture of Baptism

### It identifies us with Christ's 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).*

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## What Baptism Doesn't Do

Baptism doesn't make you a believer. Rather, it is the sign and seal that you already believe.

Baptism doesn't save you, only your faith in Christ does that.

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## What Baptism Does

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God -not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

Baptism is a public testimony identifying a believer with Christ. In New Testament times, slaves were often baptized after they were sold. This showed the community that the slave now belonged to a new master. In the same way, a believer is declaring to everyone that he now belongs to Christ by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:48).

### For Reflection:

What effect do you think the public baptism of 3000 believers in one day had on the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:41)?

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## Who should Be Baptized?

Every person who has **BELIEVED** in Christ.

*"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized..." (Acts 2:41)*

*"Simon himself believed and was baptized..." (Acts 8:13)*

*"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12)*

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## When Should I Be Baptized?

How soon after they believed were the following people baptized?

3000 people – Acts 2:41

Ethiopian official – Acts 8:35-38

Paul – Acts 9: 17-19

Philippian jailer – Acts 16:32-33

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## OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

### **Who can baptize?**

You will be baptized by a Heritage pastor. If there is a person who has had a significant impact on your spiritual journey and would like that person to baptize you, that is fine, so long as that person has faith in Christ and has been baptized.

### **Can my family be baptized together?**

Yes! If each family member fully understands the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. Young children who wish to be baptized are asked to meet with the Children's Pastor for a pre-baptism conversation. However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. It puts undue pressure on them and delays your obedience.

### **Should I be baptized if I still have sin areas I'm working on in my life?**

If we waited to be free from all the sin in our life before we are baptized, no one would ever be baptized. The key in this question is found in the phrase "working on." If you are not ready to give up a sinful lifestyle, it is recommended that you wait to be baptized. Baptism will not give you a special power to overcome sin; it is by the grace of God that we overcome sin in our lives (Titus 2: 11-12). When a person decides to get baptized, she is making a public statement that she is a child of God and God's children do what pleases Him.

However, the Scriptures recognize that we are "prone to wander." The apostle John said, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John 2: 1). The apostle goes on to say, "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He (Jesus) walked" (1 John 2:6). So, on the one hand we should recognize our forgiveness when we sin. On the other hand, our lifestyle should not be characterized as a sinful one but one that is living in the grace of God.

### **What should I wear and what should I bring when I am baptized?**

Women will be provided with baptismal robes (located in the women's restroom to the east of the café) on the day of the baptism but will still need to wear shorts and a top or a one-piece swimsuit. Men can wear shorts or swimsuit and a shirt. Bring a towel, a change of clothes and a plastic bag to put your wet clothes into.

### **Does the person baptizing me have to wear baptism clothes?**

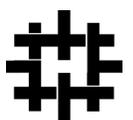
No. The baptizing is done from outside the baptismal. The person stands between the baptismal and the stage area. It is important that the congregation see the person being baptized. We also use a video camera to project the baptism onto the large media screen in the auditorium. This is especially helpful for people who are sitting towards the back or the opposite side from where the baptismal is located.

### **Will I have to say anything?**

You will not be required to say anything except to answer the questions asked in the affirmative. If you would like to give a testimony, please write out your testimony & contact Debbi Dayton at 614.898-9412x511 or [d Dayton@heritagecc.org](mailto:d Dayton@heritagecc.org) before the baptismal service.

### **Special needs?**

All of our leaders can perform private baptisms in special circumstances. A special need is typically classified as a physical disablement that would prevent you from entering the water. Fear of large crowds or fear of water is not usually considered a special need. Please be sure to talk to a pastor if you are hesitant to get baptized because of these fears. These are real fears but are often alleviated once you have an understanding of how the baptismal service will look.



# What the Day of Your Baptism Will Entail

**Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes early:** You will meet with a pastor (Room TBA) 20 minutes before the service begins. Please change into your baptism attire before meeting with the pastor so you can go immediately into the service. You will be sitting in the front row of the section in front of the baptismal tank. There will be several rows behind you reserved for your friends and family.

**Towels & What to Wear:** Please bring your own towel. Robes are in the women's restroom. You should change in the restrooms across from the Cry Room located to the east of the Café. Women may wear a one-piece bathing suit or shorts and shirt under your robe. Men may wear shorts and a T-Shirt. Please return wet towels and robes to the restrooms where you changed.

**When the baptism occurs in the service:** The baptisms will take place at the end of the service. The pastor will let you know when to line up. Please line up along the wall in the order that you are given at the pre-service meeting.

**What happens when you are baptized:** While you are being baptized, the praise team will be singing songs of worship to the Lord. The person baptizing you will ask the following questions to which you answer in the affirmative:

*"Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead on the third day, proving He was God?"*

*"Do you renounce Satan and all of his ways?"*

*"Do you turn from sin and promise to live for God through the help of the Holy Spirit?"*

The person baptizing will then say:

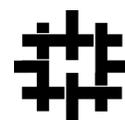
*"Based on your profession of faith, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of His Son Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit."*

You will hold your nose and the baptizer will place their left hand on your hand, they will use their right forearm and hand to support your back and neck, and then fully immerse you. Someone will be taking a picture of you as you are being baptized. After you are baptized, you will come up out of the baptismal, and meet with those who will pray with you.

**When to exit the auditorium after your baptism:** Once everyone is baptized and all prayers have been prayed, you may exit and get your wet clothing off. It does get a bit chilly so if you want to bring more than one towel from home, that's fine.

Invite your family and friends! Use this as an opportunity for your family and friends to celebrate with you and also to help your pre-Christian friends experience one of the most exciting Christian ceremonies.

What if I have questions? Contact Debbi Dayton at 614.898-9412x511 or [ddayton@heritagecc.org](mailto:ddayton@heritagecc.org).



# Is My Child Old Enough to be Baptized?

Each time we have a church wide baptism, the question inevitably arises from young children, “Can I be baptized?” This question then gets parents searching out the answer to, “Should my child be baptized?” Though the question of baptism is usually prompted in young hearts that witness the event, there are cases in which young children bring it up seemingly out of the proverbial blue. So how should a parent address this important question?

Children usually begin to ask the question around 5 or 6 years old, some earlier and some later. The following guidelines will prove helpful to you as you consider baptism for your child.

1. Can your child articulate a “believable profession of faith?” When asked about his/her faith, does he/she need help from you to clearly explain its meaning? If so, he/she isn’t ready for baptism.
2. Does he/she understand that his/her faith is a life-long commitment? Most children in the 5-11 year-old range cannot fully grasp the idea that their faith is a life long journey and not something that will last for only a little while. When we are baptized, we are telling the church that we intend to serve Christ for the remainder of our years on earth. Ask yourself, “Do I think my child has the capacity to understand this?”
3. Some children seem to come out of the womb as “spiritually-minded” children. Be sensitive to this orientation. Nurture and appreciate it. Though the number of these spiritually-oriented children is low, it is interesting that they tend to be the ones that want to wait before being baptized. They think carefully about it and view it as a huge event. Let’s learn something from this. It is important that when our children begin to think about baptism that we do all we can to ensure that they see it as very important—as a milestone in their spiritual journey.
4. Many people who are baptized at a young age usually feel that they need to be baptized again during their adolescent or adult years. Again, let’s learn from this pattern. Generally speaking, young children do not embrace the faith as their own. Rather, they embrace the faith because it is important to the most important people in their life. We should commit ourselves to work toward, pray for and hope that they will one day embrace the faith as their own. It is at this point that baptism is very meaningful to the child.

5. You are not a spiritually insensitive parent if you say “no” to your child when they want to be baptized. It is true that baptisms took place quickly after a person’s conversion in the New Testament. However, these were adults who were converted. It is not clear if children were baptized when an entire household was baptized (e.g., the Philippian jailer). We believe each person must make his/her own decision to be baptized. When your child asks you to be baptized, you do not need to “jump on it” like you would when they express an interest in piano lessons or playing soccer. Ask them why and let them know you will think about it. But wait and see if it comes up again. If it only comes up after church wide baptisms, that’s a fairly good sign that they are not ready—the Holy Spirit is not leading them. But if it continues to come up, especially with nothing prompting it, that’s probably a good indication that the Spirit of God is leading in your child’s life.

At Heritage, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. We do have baptism classes for children up to 5th grade.

We do have child dedications for younger children. The child dedication is a covenant between the parents and God on behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his/her own personal confession of Christ. The baptism talked about in the Bible was only for those who were old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ. We encourage every believer to be baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were baptized as infants.

