

BAPTISM

@ CALVARY

Baptism is a beautiful picture that illustrates the personal reality of the gospel. It is also an important scriptural directive for every believer. When we consider the command to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-15, 28:19), several questions arise that must be addressed. While we could never fully address all of the questions concerning baptism in this limited space, we will attempt to answer the following three questions:

1. Why is baptism important for every believer?
2. Is there a minimum age required before a person can be baptized?
3. What is the process that one follows in order to be baptized at Calvary Baptist Church?

1. Why is baptism important for every believer?

Before answering the question "Why is baptism important for every believer?" we first need to answer the question, "What is baptism?"

Baptism is an outward picture of an inward decision that a person has made to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Baptism does not save you and it does not make you holier. God's Word tells us that salvation is by grace alone, not of works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8,9). Baptism is an outward display of something that has already taken place in a person's heart. Therefore, baptism always follows a clear profession of one's faith in Jesus Christ.

Baptism is not merely a religious ritual, and should not be taken lightly. It has meaning and importance because of what it represents. Baptism demonstrates the sacrifice that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made for all mankind. He died in our place and for our sins. He shed His sinless blood to pay the God-ordained price for sin. Jesus was victorious over death when He arose from the dead on the third day, and in so doing,



purchased our eternal life. Without the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and His ultimate victory over death and the grave, we would have no hope of reconciling our sin debt before a holy God (2 Corinthians 5:18). Those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior have been rescued from the wrath of God and promised eternal life (Romans 1:16-20). Baptism celebrates this!

Baptism comes from the Greek word, "baptizo," meaning to immerse and is one of two ordinances given by the Lord in Scripture (the other being Communion, or The Lord's Table). In

baptism, those who have repented of their sins and have come to faith in Jesus Christ, illustrate the basis of their relationship with Christ and also identify with **His Death** (as they stand in the water, prepared to be immersed), **His Burial** (as they are immersed down into the water), and **His Resurrection** (as they are brought back up out of the water).

Baptism is also a matter of obedience for the believer. Baptism was not man's idea, but God's command. In Matthew 28:19-20, when Jesus gave the Great Commission, He commanded His disciples to **"Go therefore and make (more) disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."**

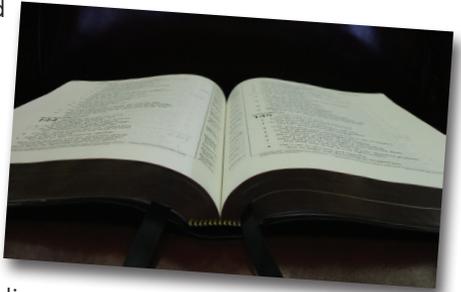
In fact, as a matter of obedience, Jesus Himself insisted upon being baptized. Matthew 3:13-15 (ESV) records, **"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do**

you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’”

Jesus wanted to do what was right (righteous). Baptism was commanded and Jesus obeyed that commandment the same way He obeyed every command of God. Jesus insisted upon being baptized because it was righteous to obey every command that God had given.

Whenever a believer follows the Lord in baptism, they fulfill the commandment of Jesus to do so and also profess the Lord publicly according to the example that Jesus Christ Himself provided.

Because of this, we urge every believer to pursue baptism at his or her earliest opportunity.



2. Is there a minimum age required before a person can be baptized?

While Scripture is clear that every believer should be baptized, the age at which a believer is to be baptized is not directly addressed in Scripture. In other words, the command to be baptized does not settle the issue of age appropriateness.

We recognize that the consideration of the appropriate age for a believer to be baptized can develop into an emotionally charged debate. Likewise, we take seriously our scriptural mandate to lead the local church in all areas of doctrine and practice (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2), including the stewardship of the church ordinances.

Children pursue baptism for many reasons, but often do not understand the gospel or the purpose of baptism. Because baptism represents the completed work of salvation in a person's life, it is necessary to ask questions to clarify a baptismal candidate's understanding about salvation and baptism. The Bible clearly teaches that baptism takes place after salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41, 8:12, 18:8). To confuse the order of salvation and baptism is to confuse salvation by grace alone as well as the purpose of baptism, which can also lead to a false sense of security later in life. For these reasons, we believe it is vitally important to receive a clear, verbal testimony of the person's conversion to Christ before baptizing them, regardless of their age (1 Peter 3:15).

In the Bible, the verbal testimony of the individual becomes the key indicator of that person meeting the requirement to be baptized. In each case, the person who gives a clear testimony of their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior is immediately baptized without hesitation (Acts 8:35-38). Although time and life-confirmation is preferable for some before baptizing a person, there is no biblical mandate to require it.

It is also important to note that in the balance of biblical examples given, it was an individual and not their parent who requested baptism. This very fact helps to demonstrate a personal understanding by the baptismal candidate of his or her conversion and the need to publicly illustrate that reality to others.

We believe that children can be converted unto salvation and if converted should be allowed to follow the Lord in believer's baptism. However, parents should never feel pressured to rush a child forward into baptism. Parents are encouraged to



ask questions and give some time to ensure that their child has a clear understanding of the gospel and thus has truly experienced a conversion and can articulate that understanding to those who are responsible to give the oversight of the ministry before God. To that end, parents are encouraged to join the church leadership as they work with their child to determine their understanding of baptism.

The salvation of the baptismal candidate is our main concern; after all, baptism is a picture of and not a necessity for a person's salvation. Therefore, the purpose of the examination process by church leadership is to allow those who provide stewardship for the ordinances of the local church to be fairly confident of a conversion before baptizing any person into the membership of the local church (Acts 2:41).

3. What is the process that one follows in order to be baptized at Calvary Baptist Church?

If you are interested in presenting yourself as a candidate for baptism, or if you would like to talk with someone about baptism, there are a few options available to you.

- 1. You can come to the front row of the auditorium during one of our closing invitation and response times or after any regular church service.** One of our "First Responders" will be available to answer any questions that you might have.
- 2. You can contact the church office by phone or online** to schedule a time for one of our church staff to answer any questions that you might have concerning baptism.
- 3. Adults can attend one of our "Welcome Classes."** This 6-week class is designed for those who are considering baptism and/or church membership, as well as those who would like to learn

more about our church and other ministries here at Calvary.

4. **Teens who desire to follow the Lord in baptism must attend a “Foundations Class” with our Student Ministries Pastor.** This 4-session class explains salvation, baptism, the Spirit’s work in the life of every believer, and how a believer grows in Christ.
5. **Children who desire to follow the Lord in baptism must attend a salvation/baptism orientation with our Director of Elementary Education.** During that orientation, they will have the opportunity to share their testimony and clarify their understanding of baptism.

VIDEO TESTIMONIES:

As we stated in the information above, we place great value on the verbal testimony of every candidate for baptism. For this reason, we ask each person being baptized to record a video testimony prior to his or her baptism. These videos are very casual and non-threatening for those who are being baptized, and they become a cherished reminder of their very special day. The video testimony also serves as a demonstration

to the church of the person’s salvation and understanding of what baptism represents. The congregation is also blessed as they hear the personal testimony of what Jesus Christ has done in the life of that believer.



HELP FOR PARENTS: **Talking To Children About Salvation and Baptism**

There are few things more exciting for a parent than when their child expresses a desire to become a Christian. When this happens, regardless of their age, it is important that we take the time to ensure their understanding.

Here are a few things you might consider as you respond to your child. First, we must ask effective questions. Instead of asking a child “yes” or “no” questions, it is much better to ask him or her to express what they are thinking. Instead of leading him or her with a question such as, “*Do you want to be saved?*” it is better to ask, “*Why have you come forward (or come to me) today?*” or “*Tell me what you want to talk about.*” If the child has never before prayed to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and responds by saying, “*Because I want to get baptized,*” it may be an indication that they are getting a little ahead of themselves. If that happens, we must be careful to take the time needed to encourage them and ensure they really do understand salvation and do not believe that baptism will save them.

Some questions can probe more deeply into their understanding. One such question is, “*If someone asked you how to become a Christian, what would you tell them?*” It is important to be patient at this point, because the child may not have a quick answer. Asking a follow-up question such as, “*What do you think you would say to them?*” may help them begin to share their thoughts. Once again, it is important to be patient and to allow the child time to express their understanding. Resist the urge to feed them the answers you long to hear them say. After all, it is the child’s story to tell as God’s Holy Spirit leads them. Children so desire to please us that we can unintentionally lead them to recite a testimony that we have co-authored, rather than the exclusive one that God alone is writing upon their hearts.

We must also resist the temptation to go into further explanation until

the child can articulate something regarding what they believe about the process of becoming a Christian. Waiting to hear their answer will enable you to clarify with them any areas about which they might be confused. If the child's answer to the question, *"If someone asked you how to become a Christian, what would you tell them?"* is *"You have to go to church,"* or *"You have to be baptized,"* or *"You have to be good,"* then you know that they are lacking some of the basic understanding of salvation. That's all right! God is still at work! They are still safe, and you can be used of God at that very moment to be a wonderful blessing to that child.

At that time, be sure to affirm the child and do not make him or her feel like they gave a wrong answer. Compliment them on their desire to follow God and their courage in coming forward (or coming to you). You might also say something such as, *"I am so happy that you came forward (or came to me) about this... I am going to pray for you right now... and then, we will talk about this some more in a week or so, okay?"* Make sure they understand that you are not simply *"blowing them off,"* but, instead, that you truly want to talk with them more at a later time. You might say something such as, *"I believe you are learning some very important things about God and I am so happy we will be able to continue to talk about what you are learning."*

Sometimes the process takes months or even years. However, in His time, God will call them and give them understanding, even if it might seem very basic to us. As you pray for your child, pray also that God will grant you patience in this process, and that He will guide you in leading your child through further discussions about salvation. In your prayer with your child, you can thank God for them and their desire to know Him better... you can ask God to continue helping them to learn about who He is and that He (God) would continue drawing them to Himself. And please remember that we are here for you in this process. Don't hesitate to contact one of our pastoral staff members if you have any questions.

What a wonderful privilege God has given us to be able to share the truth of the gospel with the world and especially those whom we hold dearest. The outline below explains the areas that should be covered in your conversation as well as various Scripture that you may find helpful in explaining salvation and baptism.

- A. Have your child share their testimony about their salvation experience.
- B. Talk through the Plan of Salvation step-by-step to make sure they understand what they have done or need to do (whichever the case may be).
 1. Sin (Romans 3:10; 3:23)
What is sin? Who sins? Do they sin?
 2. Jesus Died for Our Sins (Romans 5:8) (John 3:16)
Discuss the story of Jesus dying on the cross.
Why did He do that? Who did He die for? Did He die for you?
 3. The Wages of Sin... BUT...(Romans 6:23)
 - a. What are wages?
What is death (physical/spiritual)?
 - b. The gift is paid for – it is free to the person receiving it, but it has to be accepted or received
Who paid for this gift? – Jesus paid for it.
There is nothing you can do to earn or deserve this gift (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 4. Acceptance (Romans 10:9; 10:13)
This is not to be done light-heartedly.
Did they ask Christ to forgive their sins? Did they ask Him to be their Savior?
If they did, then...assurance

5. Assurance

They cannot lose salvation. They did nothing to earn it, so they can do nothing to lose it (Ephesians 2:8-9), and no one can take it from them (John 10:28-29).

If they were truly repentant, God forgives their sin (Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 43:25). It is also important to remember that salvation does not come by merely saying the words of a prayer. The reality of a true conversion is seen in a life that shows obedience to God's Word and a love for others.

C. What's Next? Baptism!

1. What Baptism Is

Obedience to God (Matthew 28:19)

A picture of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Colossians 2:12)

Identifies you with Christ (Romans 6:4)

2. What Baptism Isn't

Baptism cannot get you to heaven (only salvation can do that).

The water itself is just water; there is nothing magical or special about the water.

When we get the order of salvation and baptism right, it becomes a beautiful picture to the watching world about God's wonderful gift of grace. May God bless you as you follow Him and lead others to Him.

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