

BAPTISM

The content of this document is designed to help you understand the Bible's teaching on baptism. We encourage you to read and reflect on each of the Scripture passages referenced.



WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?

The Bible teaches that every person who is a follower of Jesus should be baptized. Many times in Scripture it says, *"Believe and be baptized."* God wants every believer to be baptized as an expression of their love and devotion to Him. In His final words to His followers before ascending to heaven, Jesus said, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* (Matthew 28:19-20).

WHAT DOES BAPTISM SIGNIFY?

The word "baptism" comes from the Greek language of the New Testament. Literally, the word baptism means to immerse, to douse, to saturate. Figuratively, baptism means identification. One usage of the word baptism that combines these two meanings relates to the production of colored cloth. When a piece of cloth was dipped into a vat of dye, it was said to have been "baptized". The cloth was literally "immersed" in the dye, and at the same time it was "identified" with a new colour. For a follower of Jesus, being physically immersed in water signifies the spiritual reality of identifying with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, baptism is the outward testimony of an inner spiritual reality.

Romans 6:3-5 says, *"When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace – a new life in a new land! That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus."* Baptism can be described as the wedding ring of the Christian life. It's the outward reminder/symbol of the inward commitment that you have made to Jesus.

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Baptism is not necessary for salvation. The only condition for salvation is personal trust in Jesus (John 1:12; 3:16), and the only basis for salvation is the free gift of God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is a spiritual event that follows a person's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation. It publicly indicates that a person is a follower of Jesus.

WHY DO WE ONLY PRACTICE BAPTISM BY IMMERSION?

The word "baptize" means to immerse, to douse, to saturate someone with water. This was how everyone was baptized in the New Testament. Even Jesus was baptized by immersion. Baptism by immersion is important because it reminds us of the spiritual reality of being identified with Jesus' death and resurrection.

"Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ." (Colossians 2:12) By being baptized you're saying, *"I'm dying to my old sins. They're forgiven, they're forgotten, they're out of my life – and I've started a brand new life in Christ."*

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Baptism is for believers (Acts 8:12 and 10:47-48). A believer is someone who has realized that their sin has separated them from God. They have given up on all efforts to reach God through good works or religious activity. They have concluded that Jesus' death on the cross for their sins is the only thing that can bridge the gap between them and God. A believer is someone who has decided to trust Christ alone for their salvation. If you have come to this point in your spiritual journey, then the answer is yes, you are ready to be baptized.

Depending on your church background, perhaps you were baptized as an infant. Your parents likely hoped that one day you would choose to become a follower of Jesus. Your upcoming baptism as a believer does not deny or renounce the baptism you received as a young child. In our church instead of baptizing infants and young children, we pray over them and dedicate them to the Lord (Mark 10:16).



WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

A powerful part of every baptism service is when people have an opportunity to hear what Jesus has done in your life. Although it is not a requirement for you to publically share your spiritual journey in front of the congregation before you can be baptized, everyone is asked to prepare a brief testimony (your spiritual story) even if it won't be shared publically. Sometimes another family member or a friend might be willing to read your testimony to the congregation, or sometimes it might be shared through print or video.

Please use the following outline as you prepare your testimony:

1. Share your name and then describe what your life was like before you decided to follow Jesus. Emphasize point #3 if you became a follower of Jesus as a young child.
2. What happened in your life that caused you to seek after God? Include when and how you became a follower of Jesus.
3. How has your life changed since choosing to follow Jesus? Perhaps include a favorite Bible verse that is meaningful to you.
4. Why do you want to be baptized?

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WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY OF MY BAPTISM?

You will be asked to meet prior to the church service with everyone who is being baptized. The baptisms will take place in a soft hot tub. Remember to bring a large towel. Women are asked to wear dark clothing – either pants or long shorts and a sweatshirt (not a t-shirt) or a one-piece bathing suit underneath a t-shirt. Men are asked to wear pants or long shorts and a shirt that you don't mind getting wet.

You can be baptized by anyone who is a follower of Jesus and who has been baptized as a believer. Please let us know if you have a preference regarding who will baptize you.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

If you are interested in pursuing baptism, please let us know through contacting one of our pastors, or through checking off "baptism" on a Communicate Card, or through contacting the church office at 403-851-0011 or office@rockpointe.ca. Someone will meet with you to discuss any questions you might have, to review your testimony, and to pray for you. We will also want to confirm the correct spelling of your name for your baptism certificate.

Please invite friends and family to your baptism! People will want to celebrate this special time in your life. Baptism services are also a powerful witness to spiritually searching friends and family as they hear about what God is doing in people's lives. Encourage people to bring cameras and to use them during your baptism.

God bless you as you prepare for this special day! If you have questions, feel free to contact any of our RockPointe pastors. We would be glad to help you.

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