

Preparing for Your Baptism



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It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Today more than ever, we are a visually-oriented society. What people hear is often impactful, but what they hear *and* see demonstrated will impact them even more. Water baptism is just such a picture.

When we were born physically, we were automatically identified with the kingdom of the world into which we were born. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes our natural state as those “dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (2:1-3).

The moment we confess our sin and trust Christ’s death as payment for our sin, the Bible teaches us that we are “born again” and the Holy Spirit brings us spiritually into new life in Christ. We are no longer under the wrath of God, but given a new identity as daughters and sons of our King. Paul continues in Ephesians 2:4-9, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

After trusting Christ as our Savior, God’s Word commands us to give public testimony of our faith in Christ by means of water baptism. Water baptism is God’s creative way to picture our salvation. It helps us visualize what happened to us when we were born again. Water baptism, like a picture, helps you tell others what Christ accomplished for you by His death and resurrection. Additionally, through water baptism, you are publicly identifying yourself with Christ—His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-5).

Water baptism in no way contributes to your salvation. It simply bears witness to the fact that you have trusted Christ and are born again. It is the first step in discipleship—the first step in following Jesus as our Master and Lord. Those whom God has already placed into Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit should therefore be baptized in water.

Understanding the Word “Baptism”

The word *baptism* did not originate as an English word, but it has been transliterated (that is, carried over letter by letter) from the Greek language. In fact, there is only one letter different in both the noun and verb forms of the word:

Greek	English
Noun: <i>baptisma</i> (drop the final <i>a</i>)	= baptism
Verb: <i>baptize</i> (change <i>o</i> to <i>e</i>)	= baptize

You will notice that translators of the Bible into English did not actually translate the word. They merely copied the original term. This leaves us asking, “What does it mean?”

The Greek term *baptizo* is derived from the earlier and more basic verb *bapto*. The primary meaning of this word is “to dip”. It was used to describe a piece of cloth being dipped into a dye solution. It was also used to describe dipping a picture into water, an object into wax, a finger into blood, and other similar uses. The *-izo* ending of *baptizo* adds a casual significance to the root word, resulting in the meaning “to cause to dip”.

Baptizo is used in this way throughout Greek literature. It has been used to describe soldiers passing through water immersed up to their chests and of animals that drowned in water. It was used to describe a boat sinking and being “immersed” into a body of water. Nearly all standard lexicons of Greek language suggest that the basic meaning of *baptizo* is “to dip,” “to immerse,” or “to sink”.

Understanding the Message of Baptism

In the New Testament, baptism involved a public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Being lowered into the water symbolizes or pictures being washed by the blood of Jesus. Arising out of the water symbolizes newness in Christ—a result of spiritual cleansing through Jesus. Through baptism, therefore, believers in Jesus Christ are publicly identifying themselves with Christ and His Church. It is their announcement to all who witness the event that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord.

The Procedure of Baptism

At Chapelstreet Church, we practice baptism by immersion. At our Baptism Class, our pastors will explain more thoroughly what this involves. You will be dipped down into the water, and then brought back out, symbolizing your death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ. Baptisms take place at our Keslinger and Mill Creek Campuses in a round, portable tank filled with warm water. Typically, we also conduct an outdoor baptism service each year in the summer months.

If desired, you are welcome to choose a “sponsor” to stand just outside the tank as you are baptized. The “sponsor” is a person who played a significant role in your spiritual life.

You will be required to write out (though not necessarily share verbally) your Faith Story—a personal statement of faith describing how you came into relationship with Jesus. (See “Faith Story Worksheet” for further guidance.)

Dress Code for Baptisms

All: Everyone who is baptized will be provided with a special Chapelstreet Church baptism shirt to wear during the baptism service. These navy-blue shirts feature the Chapelstreet logo on the front and the words “made new” in large white lettering on the back. The shirt is yours to keep as a reminder of your special day and a conversation starter to share your commitment to Christ!

Footwear: Everyone who is baptized may enter the tank barefoot.

Men: Wear dark colored pants or shorts

Women: Wear a bathing suit under longer shorts or pants and the t-shirt we will provide for you.

Children: Children may wear shorts with their t-shirts.

What to Bring

1. Chapelstreet Church baptism t-shirt (will be distributed at the Baptism Class)
2. Complete change of clothes (outer and inner garments)
3. A towel
4. Appropriate toiletries (some may want to bring a hairdryer)

Details for the Baptism Service

1. Arrive at the church 20 minutes prior to the start of the service in which you will be baptized.
2. A staff member or volunteer will be present to serve as the baptism attendant and show you where you can store your change of clothes.
3. Keep your towel with you and sit near the baptism tank. Just prior to your baptism, all baptism candidates will line up in the order in which they will be baptized.

4. The first person to be baptized will hand his or her towel to the assistant and walk up the stairs into the tank where the officiating pastor will lead through the baptism.
5. A staff member or volunteer will assist you in getting out of the tank and will hand you your towel.
6. Proceed to the designated bathrooms to dry off and change clothes.
7. After changing, you may return to the service.

The Value of a Faith Story

Making the decision to be baptized is also an opportunity to write out your faith story, which testifies to your faith in Jesus. All baptism candidates at Chapelstreet Church are asked to write out their faith story. On the next page of this handout, you will a worksheet that will help you write out your faith story.

For some people, their faith story will involve sharing the date that they placed their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. Others may not remember the exact details leading up to their conversion, but they now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is their Savior. The important element in a written proclamation of faith is an understanding that salvation comes by faith alone, and no merit or good works on our part can bring about our salvation. We can never earn our salvation, nor do we deserve to be saved. It is a free gift of grace that is received by faith alone.

Begin writing your faith story by jotting notes on the next two pages.

Faith Story Worksheet

Complete this worksheet and submit to Jan at jbauserman@chapelstreetchurch.com no later than the Thursday prior to your baptism.

Your Name: _____

Baptism Date: _____

Share God's Story

What is your understanding of the gospel?

Explain what it means to "become a Christian." How does a person enter into a relationship with Jesus?

Share Your Story

When did you first sense your need for God's forgiveness?

How did you enter into a relationship with Christ?

How would you describe your relationship with God? What practices and/or disciplines have you found to be significant in your spiritual growth?

These verses may help you as you write your faith story: Romans 3:21-24, Romans 10:9-10, John 3:16-17, Philippians 3:7-14.

