



# INTRODUCTION TO BAPTISM

*Immersing yourself in the life of Jesus*

## A Brief Description of Baptism

Baptism is one of the fullest and richest expressions of the Christian faith, symbolically joining all Christ-followers from the past, present and future together, in *one* family. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20). We identify ourselves, through baptism, as brothers and sisters in Christ, the head of our family.

Since Jesus was baptized, almost 2,000 years ago, baptism has been *the* signifier of membership in God's family. This is important as it conveys that we are not only free from the guilt of sin, but that we have also entered into a new relationship as adopted children of God.

Baptism as a symbol doesn't save anyone, nor does it earn any points with God. It is, however, a celebration of which the whole Kingdom of God partakes. Baptism is an outward symbol of the transformation that has already taken place inside of you, communicating the commitment that Christ, and His Body the Church, have for you, and the commitment that you have, in turn, for the Church community.

## Believing Before Baptism

Baptism is our response to God's love for us. God demonstrated his love by initiating a way to regain our original relationship with Him after WE chose to rebel. Humanity willfully chooses to deny God and His intended life for us. But because of God's great love for us, He seeks to restore us in spite of our rebellion. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:16-18).

There are two main parts to belief in the Bible—believing “that” and believing “in.” The two go hand-in-hand, equally. To Believe then, requires both belief *that* and *in* Jesus Christ. To possess one without the other is not authentic belief. Believing *that* something is to believe in the facts. So, to believe the facts about Jesus is to believe that: Jesus is God in human form. This is called “God Incarnate.” God *sent* His Son into the world. Jesus on earth was fully human (100%) and fully God/divine (100%). There is a mystery to this, but none-the-less, it is important not to diminish either Jesus' humanity or His divinity.

Another fact is that Jesus is God's one and only Son, sent to us to save us from our estranged relationship with God. Our estranged state is called “sin.” Because God is perfect—perfectly good, perfectly great, perfectly true, perfectly just, etc., God cannot be in relationship with someone imperfect, or else God wouldn't be perfect anymore. In other words, it is impossible for God not to be perfect. Plus, there is no earthly way of gaining or earning perfection—it is impossible. This is quite a predicament (most of us know our imperfections very well). Therefore, in order for humanity to be in a right relationship with God, we needed something to make us perfect again. Only a divine solution can correct a divine problem. God would have been perfectly just had He

chose to let us remain in our estranged state, of our own free will. Thankfully, God is also, perfectly loving. God sent his Son to die FOR us so that our sins would be forgiven (that our estrangement would be compensated for)—a divine solution to a divine problem. Jesus Christ had to die as 100% human so that humanity's estrangement would die 100%, for those that believe. Christ had to die as 100% God in order to pay the divine price that no human, or group of humans, could pay.

This leads to the next fact of believing, that Jesus Christ resurrected from death 100%, in order to conquer death (and estrangement) so that we might live. If Christ did not rise from the dead, conquering death, than our sins and estrangement have not been conquered either and we would still be subject to spiritual and physical death. By our baptism then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life (Romans 6:4). Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and he rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). This is an important fact to believe in.

The result of believing in the above facts leads to the fact of eternal life. As God's own, by believing through faith, followers of Christ will be made complete (whole) and exist in relationship with the one, true, God of the universe forever.

The other main aspect of Biblical belief is believing *in*. Believing in means placing trust in something or someone. So, to believe in Jesus Christ is to place your life in His hands, in faith and trust.

A wonderful demonstration of this concept can be found in the great 19th-century tightrope walker, Jean Francois Gravelet – alias Charles Blondin – (1824–1897), who crossed Niagara Falls several times. On one crossing, Blondin executed a daring backwards somersault. Thereafter, the French acrobat made each crossing of the Falls in a different manner. He crossed blindfolded; trundling a wheelbarrow; on stilts; in the dark with Roman candles flaring from his pole tips; and sitting down halfway to make an omelette! On Sept 15, 1860, he even made a crossing carrying his manager, Harry Colcord (Guinness World Records).

Now it's one thing to believe *that* Charles Blondin did these amazing feats. It's quite another to *trust* Charles enough to climb on his back while he is achieving this marvel. So it is in our relationship with Jesus Christ—the proof of our belief lies in our demonstration of trust and faith.

## **The Symbol of Baptism**

Baptism does not *make* you a Christian. Baptism is a symbol to demonstrate that Jesus has already come into your life and changed you. It is important for you to understand that baptism doesn't "save" you. You are *saved* only by a believing faith in Jesus Christ (see above). 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 like a wedding ring—it's an outward symbol of the covenant or commitment you have made in Jesus. A ring is not required to be or stay married. However, the ring is a rich symbol to the bride and groom of their covenant with God and each other. It also tells the world of their commitment and reminds family and friends of the responsibility they share to uphold the couple. This is similar to Baptism. One can be a Christ follower without it, but would miss the fullness and richness that Baptism gives to the Christian, the Church, and the world.

Baptism symbolizes Christ's life, death and resurrection from the dead. Christ literally conquered death—both physical and spiritual. Christ reversed the consequences of our rebellion for all who follow him. This is what we symbolize when we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We symbolize the transformation from death to life through

God's provision of Jesus Christ. We also symbolize (1) our commitment to Christ's Body, the Church, and (2) our willingness follow Christ by sacrificially pouring out our lives for the sake of God's plan of reconciling the world to Himself.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." [Isaiah 25:8] "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" [Hosea 13:14] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

## **Following Christ In Baptism**

As followers of Christ, we literally *follow* Him—His person, His life and His commands. Therefore, since Jesus was baptized, we should be baptized. As the gospel of Mark describes, Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river (Mark 1:9).

We know that we have come to know him, if we obey his commands (1 John 2:3). As a consequence, many of the people who heard him believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).

Jesus also commanded, "Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

As stated above, we follow Christ in our willingness to sacrifice and suffer for God's divine plan—to reconcile the world back to Himself. Our lives no longer belong to ourselves alone. We no longer have a claim of ownership on our lives. Paradoxically, this is the truest form of freedom. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it (Matthew 16:25).

## **Baptism In Public**

It is important that baptism is practiced in public, in your local church community. Although there are elements of your faith that are personal, between you and God, the Christian faith is by no means private. The misunderstanding that, "my faith is private," is a product of 20<sup>th</sup> century America, not of the Bible. No one alone is the Body of Christ OR Family of God. We together are Christ's Body and Family of God.

God exists in perfect, authentic community—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is always in perfect relationship and never alone. There is a mystery to this, but none-the-less, God's relationship is a truth that the Church has protected from the beginning. This is why our faith is not private. We are to become like Christ who exists in relationship. Moreover, we represent Christ as a Church, together, on earth.

We are God's family, which is our first family because God is the head. We are not perfect, and won't be until Christ's return, but are growing to learn and live this mystery. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the

chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20). The unity of the church is important to God, not just a local body, but the universal community of faith, of which you are identifying with through baptism.

Baptism in isolation would rob the individual, as well as the individual's church family, of this important celebration. This would greatly detract from the intent of blessing that baptism gives to God's family and to the world, of which we witness Christ's life-giving presence.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

## **Baptism By Immersion**

We feel that baptism by immersion is the richest expression of this important symbol. By no means do we nullify other churches or individuals that practice differently. Our aim is to honor God and our community in the fullest way possible. "I have gone my own way and now I choose to die to my old self (going down under the water) and live a new life (coming up out of the water) with Jesus as my Lord." Below are some Bible references that we understand to support our practice:

By our baptism then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life (Romans 6:4).

Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and he rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water (Matthew 3:16).

Then both Phillip and the man went down into the water and Phillip baptized him, when they came up out of the water (Acts 8:38-39).

*The Greek word "baptize" means to immerse or dip under water. We believe immersion is the best symbol of death and resurrection.*

## **Infant Baptism**

We believe that people should be baptized by their own will and volition because it is the fullest expression of the practice. In the Bible, we see men and women were baptized following their belief in Jesus. Those who believed and accepted his message were baptized (Acts 2:41).

The custom of infant baptism began most likely with Augustine of Hippo in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Long before John Calvin, Augustine's theology had an emphasis on predestination, which influenced the practice of baptism. The Church practiced infant baptism until the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, groups derived from one Church, the Catholic (or universal) Church, in practice and interpretation. One of the practices that began in some groups was baptism as believing adults. Much of the Church (universal) still practices infant baptism and maintain well thought out reasons for doing so. We however, follow the practice and interpretation of *believer's baptism*. Our goal is not to nullify other churches or practices—we do not have the authority to

deny over twelve hundred years of baptisms. We desire to be faithful with our understanding of God's Word, the Bible, and practice the fullest expression of the gift of baptism.

So what do we do with infants? We practice a ceremony intended to emphasize a commitment between the parents and God on behalf of the child. During this ceremony, the parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make their own personal confession of Christ. We have a baby dedication service for this purpose. Therefore, if you were baptized/dedicated as a baby and want be baptized as a believer to publicly confess your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we encourage you to seek God first, then be baptized by your own will if you are being led to do so.

## Why Wait?

Those who believed...were baptized...that day (Acts 2:41).

Then Phillip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, "Look some water, why shouldn't I be baptized right now?" Phillip said, "If you believe with all your heart you may." The man answered, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." So they went down into the water and Phillip baptized him (Acts 8:35-38).

The only qualification for baptism is to believe that and in Jesus Christ (see above) is the Son of God—that He died for your sins and was resurrected, conquering death for you—and to trust Jesus with your life, giving Him control. There is no reason to wait. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized.

## Next Steps: Baptism & Class

Flood offers Baptism Classes throughout the year to provide an overview of baptism as well as the opportunities to connect with a leader at Flood and get baptized on the next scheduled baptism date (or a future baptism date that works for you). The class is interactive, and about one hour in length.

We hold baptisms at various times throughout the year on Sundays, as well as a beach baptism in the summer.

**To find out when the next Baptism Class will be, and the next Baptisms, email:**

- *San Diego Campus:* [JoshKettles@DIVEintoFLOOD.com](mailto:JoshKettles@DIVEintoFLOOD.com).
- *North County Campus:* [AndyKelly@DIVEintoFLOOD.com](mailto:AndyKelly@DIVEintoFLOOD.com).
- *East County Campus:* [ScottWildey@DIVEintoFLOOD.com](mailto:ScottWildey@DIVEintoFLOOD.com).

## Further Questions?

Email [JoshKettles@DIVEintoFLOOD.com](mailto:JoshKettles@DIVEintoFLOOD.com)!

