

Water Baptism for Believers

Water baptism is a joyous experience in our walk with Christ. Jesus commanded that His disciples go into the world and make disciples; baptizing and teaching those who believe the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20). Much confusion has entered Christendom regarding water baptism for believers. This study briefly presents the biblical material upon which Grace Community Church bases its practice of water baptism.

I. The Bible Teaches Water Baptism By _____:

A. Immersion means to put something all the way under the water.

B. To baptize means to immerse something in water.

C. Look up the following scriptures. What do they say about water? (in the river; coming out of the water; lots of water; down into the water)

1. Mark 1:5 _____

2. John 3:23 _____

3. Acts 8:26-40 _____

II. The Bible Teaches That Water Baptism Is Symbolic:

A. Look up Romans 6:3-4.

This passage is describing what happens to us when we choose to rely on Jesus as our Savior. The Holy Spirit of God unites us with Jesus in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. This act of uniting us with Jesus is called Spirit Baptism. Every follower of Jesus is Spirit Baptized at the moment they put their faith in Jesus to save them. Water baptism by immersion illustrates the meaning of Spirit Baptism.

B. When we go under the water it symbolizes our dying with Jesus and leaving our old self behind; when we come up out of the water it symbolizes that we have risen with Jesus into new life! 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.

C. Water baptism also symbolizes being cleansed of our sins.

III. The Bible Teaches Water Baptism Is For _____:

The New Testament pattern is that of believers in Jesus Christ being water baptized. Look up the following scriptures and write down who is being baptized:

A. Acts 2:41 _____

B. Acts 8:12-13 _____

C. Acts 10:47-48 _____

Q. Should people who don't believe in Jesus be baptized? _____

Q. Should only pastors baptize people?

The Scriptures do not specify any restrictions on who can perform the ceremony of baptism. However, we believe that water baptism should be practiced under the authority of the local church so that the church as a whole can rejoice with the person being baptized and so that the faith of all believers in that church might be built up. In addition, the person performing the water baptism should himself be a water baptized believer having a relationship with the candidate.

Q. If one has been baptized at an early age, but had not accepted Jesus Christ as Savior prior to their water baptism, should they be re-baptized?

In Acts chapter 19 we read of those who had received the baptism of John, but who had not been baptized as believers (nor had the Holy Spirit yet come upon them). These folks were re-baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:1-7). From the Book of Acts we understand that it was the norm for believers to be water baptized. Romans 6:3-4 assumes every believer would have been water baptized. Therefore, if one has not been water baptized as a believer, they should be water baptized.

IV. The Bible Teaches That Water Baptism Is Not Necessary For Salvation:

As indicated above, water baptism is symbolic of a believer's union in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and of cleansing from sins. Water baptism is for those who have already placed their faith in Jesus for salvation. Water baptism is not necessary for salvation.

A. We are justified (made right with God) by _____ alone.

B. Look up the following passages and fill in the words:

1. Galatians 2:15-16. How is a person justified (made right with God)? By keeping the Ten Commandments (works of the law) or by faith (relying on) in Jesus Christ? _____

2. Luke 23:39-43. Did the criminal next to Jesus have the chance to be water baptized? _____ When he died, where did Jesus say his soul would go? _____?

3. BUT water baptism is an important step of ----- _____ to Jesus.

Though water baptism is not necessary for salvation it is still a very important step of obedience to the command of Christ. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus instructed His disciples to go and make disciples and He specifically directed that those who become His disciples be water baptized.

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Lord gave us water baptism to strengthen and encourage our faith and to be a witness to those who have not yet been saved.

V. Preparing For Your Baptism

A. Testimony – Prepare It and Share It.

Prepare your personal testimony using *The Three Parts of an Effective Testimony* or *the Baptism: A Bible Study Wordbook for Kids*. Schedule a 30 minute appointment with a Pastor of your choice or the Director of Children’s Ministry to share your testimony prior to the Baptismal Ceremony.

B. Pictures.

We want to capture this special moment for you and our church family so dress in whatever way you would like to be photographed. A picture will be taken before and during your baptism.

C. Practical Considerations:

Your baptismal garments must be modest both going into and coming out of the water (ladies please give careful thought to this). Bring dry clothes and toiletries for changing after the ceremony. Bring a towel, a camera and a bag into which to place your wet garments.