LIFEPOINT CHURCH

Baptism

Few events in the Christian life carry as much significance and symbolism as baptism.

Along with the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ ordained baptism as a special experience for the church to celebrate. These events give every Christian a unique opportunity to share obedience, worship, and love with God. Many, however, have questions concerning the biblical meaning and instruction concerning baptism, and this pamphlet is designed to answer several of these questions:

What is baptism?

Who should be baptized?

Why should Christians be baptized?

When should Christians be baptized?

How should Christians be baptized?

1. What is baptism?

Baptism is a public proclamation of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God created each of us to know and glorify Him, but our spiritual DNA, hijacked by sin, drives us away from His holy nature. We desire everything contrary to God's holiness, and Scripture teaches that the penalty or "wages" of this sin is death – eternal separation from God (see Romans 6:23). No human effort, including baptism, can compensate for our sinful state. But God, demonstrating both His justice and His love, has paid sin's penalty for all who receive His grace. Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, lived among us, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead to pay the penalty of sin for all who believe in Him. When we place faith in Jesus Christ, we receive God's gift of forgiveness and new life in Christ. God restores our spiritual DNA, freeing us to know and glorify Him. Baptism is a public testimony that richly symbolizes these spiritual truths. Our descent into the water visualizes our death to sin's control, and our emergence from the water proclaims our new life in Christ.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:3-5, NIV)

2. Who should be baptized?

Since baptism is a public profession of the Christian's personal faith in Jesus Christ's sacrificial act on our behalf, only those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should be baptized.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27, NIV)

3. Why should Christians be baptized?

There are two main reasons why every person who has professed faith in Jesus Christ should be baptized.

1. Jesus Christ commanded that His followers be baptized. Jesus is both Savior and Lord for every Christian, and baptism provides an opportunity for every believer to publicly submit to Christ's leadership.

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... (Matthew 28:19, NIV)

2. The early church, under the leadership of the apostles, baptized every new believer. The first Christians thought it inconceivable that someone could profess faith in Jesus Christ and not be baptized – the two were inseparable. Immediate baptism provided a rich explanation of God's work in the life of the new believer.

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, NIV)

4. ***When should Christians be baptized?***

Since baptism is a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, it should be performed after one understands the Gospel, experiences God's grace, and responds to it through faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism performed prior to these three things is representative of something other than new life in Christ and falls short of what Jesus calls us to. Many who were baptized as infants need not feel offended by this biblical understanding of baptism, for their infant baptism was performed out of the best intentions. However, obedience to Jesus' teachings on His terms requires that baptism be representative of faith in Him. As sinful people desperately dependent upon His grace we should seek to live in obedience to Him.

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailor took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and his family were baptized...he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family. (Acts 16:30-34, NIV)

5. ***How should Christians be baptized?***

The word "baptize" literally refers to some form of immersion in water, and therefore Faith Chapel practices baptism by immersion. Our death to sin's control and new lives in Christ are symbolically portrayed as we descend into and emerge from the baptism waters.

Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (John 3:23 NIV)

Summary

We have answered several important questions regarding baptism:

1. What is baptism?
Baptism is a public proclamation of faith and new life in Jesus Christ. It is an outward public testimony of an inward invisible transformation.

2. Who should be baptized?
All who have experienced God's saving grace and responded through faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

3. Why should Christians be baptized?
Out of obedience to Jesus' commands as recorded in the New Testament and evidenced in the early church.

4. When should Christians be baptized?
After experiencing God's saving grace and responding through faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

5. How should Christians be baptized?
Faith Chapel practices baptism by immersion

If you have additional questions concerning baptism or the Christian faith, please contact Pastor Tony Orlando at 619-518-2383