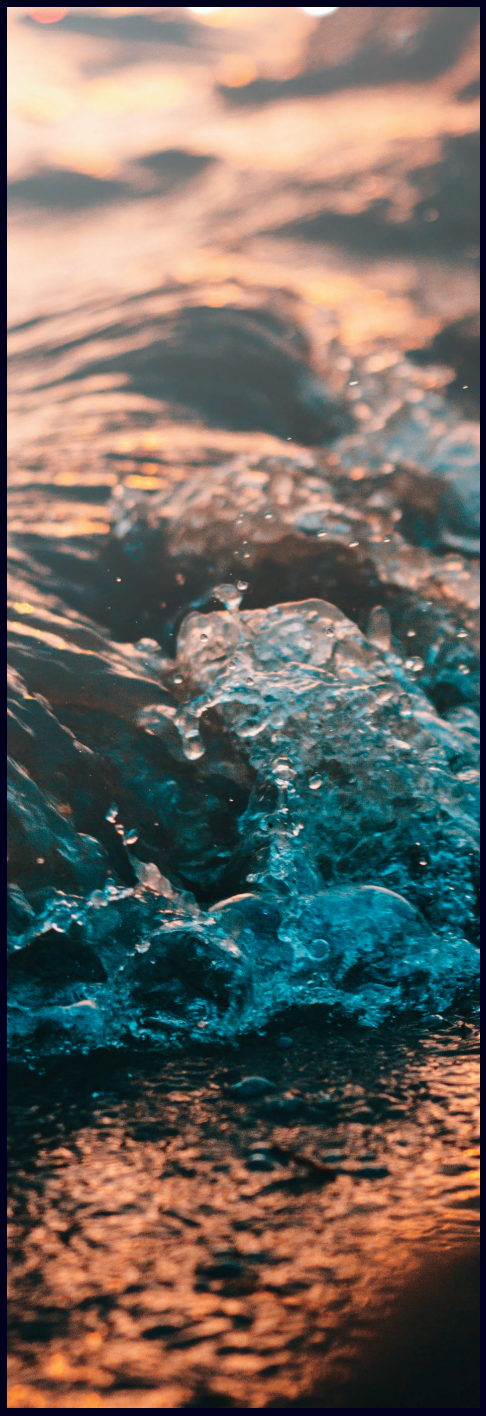
epic community church







BAPTISM

your next step in following Jesus

BAPTISM



This handbook will prepare you for and acquaint you with one of the most meaningful experiences in your Christian life! Throughout the Old Testament water was used throughout many rituals as a symbol of cleansing. The early followers of Jesus (the church) continued this Jewish symbol by baptizing someone after they had begun to follow and believed in the way of Jesus.

Typically, baptism happens after a person accepts God's gracious offer for freedom from one's sinful nature and the opportunity to become a new creation in Jesus Christ. Baptism symbolizes that a person has come to the realization that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

It is forever marked in the memory of the person being baptized, and it is the first mark of being a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Together, we will look at the biblical significance of baptism, help you prepare your story, and explain the details and symbolism of the actual baptism.

God has used the baptism service as public testimony to firmly seal the faith of many people. God will invariably use your baptism and your story to lead other people into a personal relationship with Him. Some of these people could be your friends, family and neighbors!

Let's start praying for them!

Baptism is the mark of a life committed to God. Jesus commanded us as His disciples to be baptized so it would serve as an outward symbol of an inward commitment. It would put the world on notice that we were leaving our old lives behind and embracing the lives that God has for us. And it would serve as a memorial to us of the day we fully committed ourselves to God. That's why Jesus was standing on the banks of the Jordan River that day. He was there to show us what baptism was all about.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" Matthew 3:13-17

It is there that we find our model of what baptism is and why it should be an element in the life of every person that desires to be a disciple of Jesus. Jesus was modeling something for us. He was showing us what the heart of baptism is all about. It's the mark of a life committed to God.

Jesus wanting to be immersed was a problem for John. Remember, John is telling people to repent, but Jesus had nothing to repent of. He's God. He doesn't have sins to confess or shameful deeds to wash away. But Jesus said, "I want to be baptized because it fulfills what God requires." Only then does John agree to baptize Him. The issue for Jesus was to obey His Father and do what was right.

There is something that happens when a person makes a decision to be baptized. They are not just deciding to get wet; they are dying to the old way of life and craving to live the abundant life that Jesus offers.

"Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives." Romans 6:3-4

Being baptized is about deciding to be numbered with the disciples of Jesus, not getting wet or performing some ritual. You see, people won't have a problem with someone coming to church occasionally. But you tell your friends that aren't Christians that you are getting baptized and they are going to think that you're taking this "Jesus" thing too far. Do you know why? Because they recognize how important baptism is even though many in the church don't.

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

Jesus links baptism with following Him. The issue isn’t, “Can I still go to heaven if I’m not baptized?” The thief on the cross did, but he never had the chance to be baptized. The issue is if you are a disciple of Jesus, you will gladly obey Him in this simple, yet powerful act. Many times Christians will go years without being baptized because they say they are praying about God’s will and they don’t know what to do. We’re never going to figure out what God wants us to do if we haven’t done what we know for sure He’s already asked us to do. Some of you were baptized as an infant. But that is not what Jesus was talking about.

…Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from a clean conscience.” 1 Peter 3:21

As an infant you were not able to appeal anything to God except for your crying. It did not signify anything in your life. Something amazing happens when we go into the waters of baptism. You do not leave the same. You repent before God, declare your faith in Jesus, and commit to living out His purposes for your life. It is a commitment to live for God starting from that moment.

BAPTISM PROCESS

1. **Enter the tank**
    a. *Leave the old life of sin*
2. **Water**
    a. *The cleansing agent represents cleansing from our sinful nature / brokenness*
3. **Total immersion beneath the water**
    a. We die as Jesus did.
4. **Raised out of the water**
    a. *Resurrection to new life.*
5. **Leave tank**
    a. *Entering a **NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST.***

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES TO STUDY

Acts 2:38
And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:12
...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

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

Acts 22:16
And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

John 3:5
Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

Mark 16:16
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved

FAQ'S

What about infant baptism?

The Bible teaches us that “Baptism is not a removal of dirt from your body; it is an appeal to God from a clean conscience.” 1 Peter 3:21 Throughout the New Testament, only adults were baptized. The reason is because the act of baptism represents a life that has been changed by God and reflects the decision of the person to follow Jesus. Infant baptism/dedication speaks more to the parents’ faith than it does of the child’s, and that is not the purpose of baptism. The command of Jesus to be baptized is about your personal relationship with God. So we believe that a person needs to be of an age that allows them to make the decision personally to obey Jesus in this act.

Do I have to be baptized immediately after my conversion?

There are some groups that teach you must be baptized immediately after praying to receive Jesus or you are not truly a Christian. We do not believe the New Testament supports this view. Certain people in the New Testament were baptized immediately. Those that responded to Peter’s message on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were baptized at the moment of their conversion. In other instances, such as in the case of the Apostle Paul, who was converted on the road to Damascus, was not baptized for at least three days when his sight returned to him. The point is that baptism does not have to be immediate, but it should not be left to the backburner either. If you have decided to follow Jesus, then follow His example and be baptized

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

What is an appropriate age for baptism?

"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." Acts 8:36-39

While the Bible does not address a specific age that is a minimum requirement for baptism, the real issue is really one of the heart. The passage quoted above gives us the requirement for baptism. It has nothing to do with age and everything to do with the condition of a person's spiritual condition. A person who understands that Jesus is the Son of God and has made a decision to follow Jesus is the perfect candidate for baptism. The age of the person is dependent upon their ability to understand what they are doing in baptism. This could be at the age of 10 for one person and at 14 for another. We believe that a person seeking to be baptized must understand what baptism is and know why they are entering its' waters. This cannot be an issue of religious duty or parental pressure, but instead a spiritual conviction resulting from a living faith in Jesus.

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

Who should get baptized?

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Every follower of Jesus is commanded to be baptized. This is not simply a good idea or great suggestion. It is a command of Jesus. It is a symbolic act of our desire to follow Jesus by identifying with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection through water baptism. The Apostle Paul wrote concerning baptism...

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:3-4

Baptism is our identification with Jesus and the outward symbol of our inward commitment. If you are a follower of Jesus and have asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins, then your responsibility is to obey Jesus by being baptized.

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FAQ'S (CONT'D)

Does it matter where I am baptized?

Churches over the ages have used a myriad of venues to conduct baptisms. Formal baptisteries, rivers, oceans, lakes, streams, swimming pools, Jacuzzis, and bathtubs have all been used to baptize those that wish to obey the Lord in this act. We believe all of these venues and many more are valid. The issue is not how “holy” the water is, but how sincere the person entering the water is. If a person gets married on the beach and not in a church, is their marriage still valid? Of course it is! You could get married in a zoo and it would still be valid because we understand that the issue is not the location, it is the condition of the heart and the sincerity of the faith that is being professed.

What if I was baptized at another church? Does my baptism still count?

Baptism is not about location, but about the presentation of my life to God in obedience to His Word. We recognize that some churches believe you must be baptized in their church for it to truly “count”, we believe that the Scriptures teach that baptism is about your relationship with God, not a local church. If you were baptized in one church and then later moved, your baptism has not changed in the eyes of God.

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

Am I not a Christian if I don't get baptized?

Baptism is not a prerequisite for heaven, nor are we saved through baptism. The act of going into the water doesn't save us. Jesus saved you through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. When we place our faith in His finished work, it is at that moment that we are saved. "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved." (Romans 10:9-10 NLT)
We are saved through faith, not any works that we do.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9NKJV)

To believe that baptism saves us is to believe in a Gospel that our works make us right with God. That is not the case according to Scripture. Baptism does not save you, but the saved are baptized. A person that has truly decided to follow Jesus will obey Him. If one of His commands is to be baptized, then we should obey Him, not because we believe it will save us, but because we believe that our obedience pleases God.

Can I be Re-baptized?

On occasion, people who were baptized, but then fell away from the faith afterward have asked this question. Their desire is not to find out if their baptism still "counts", but if they could be baptized again and demonstrate to God their desire to follow Him. Due to the fact that nothing appears in Scripture that would forbid this act, we encourage them to do what they believe God has put in their heart.

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

Do I have to live a perfect life once I am baptized?

This issue is, can you live a perfect life? We don't think so. Besides Jesus, no person on planet has done it yet. You were not perfect prior to your baptism and you will not be perfect afterwards. Baptism is not where your sins are forgiven. Your sins were forgiven at the cross of Jesus when you placed your faith in His finished work.

The Bible says, "If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." (1 John 1:8-9 NLT)

You are not expected to be perfect after your baptism. We are sorry to break the news to you, but you will still be the same sinner who entered the water when you exit it. However, you will have taken one huge step: the step of obedience. We have
learned that when we can obey God in the small things, following Jesus in the bigger issues of life aren't as difficult. So while you will not be perfect once you are baptized, it will probably mark a time when you got serious about the things of God and your relationship with Him.

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

What's the difference between water baptism and baptism of the Holy Spirit?

"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit... But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:5,8 NIV)

Water baptism is our identifying with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual empowering that is given to each believer in Jesus for works of service. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is when God gives spiritual gifts to His people so they can be His witnesses all over the earth. What type of power is Jesus referring to? The word translated "power" is the Greek word "dunamis", where we get our English words, "Dynamite" and "Dynamic". This power transformed the disciples of Jesus from men who were living in fear of their lives to men who were risking their lives of the sake of Gospel. How does a person receive this power? All that it takes to receive this power is to pray and ask God to empower you. Let Him know that you want to be His witness in this world and that you want to live for Him. There might not be any flashing lights and you may not have any emotional reaction at all, but watch what God does. If you ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be empowered by the Holy Spirit, He will do it!

FAQ'S (CONT'D)

Will I not go to heaven if I am not baptized?

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43NKJV)

The thief on the cross was not baptized and yet was given the promise of eternal life by Jesus. So baptism is not required for a person to go to heaven. The fact that he did not have the opportunity to be baptized does not create an excuse for those of us who have the opportunity to obey God. A person with moments to live who calls out to God can have the assurance of salvation as this thief did, yet that should not inspire laziness or idleness in following the teachings of Jesus. Every person who has the ability to be baptized should be, not because heaven depends on it, but because it is an expression of love for our Savior who died for us. The least we can do is obey Him in this simple, yet powerful act.

BAPTISM DAY

1 CLOTHING

Please bring with you a pair of shorts and a dark blue or black plain T-shirt to be baptized in. You will also need a complete change of dry clothes, a bath towel, and a plastic bag for your wet clothes; unless you want to go home sopping wet...

2 PROCEDURE

Prior to the worship gathering, you will meet your baptism instructor/leader to receive instructions. Your instructor will show you where to change your clothes and instruct you on where to wait. When it is your time to be baptized, you will enter the water. Typically, before the actual baptism, the person being baptized is allowed to share their brief story of how they have come to this point in their journey with Christ. The person designated to baptize you (which can be any person that has been baptized and has served as your spiritual leader) will put their arms around you, say a few personal words and say, "I now baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; your old life is buried and now you are raised to new life." They will dunk you straight down until you are totally immersed, then bring you back up—and the applause erupts!!!!

3 INVITATIONS

Inviting key people in your life to your baptism is a great opportunity to allow God to work through your life. You can send invitations out to your friends and family and to those close to you, who have not yet entered God's story or crossed the line of faith in Jesus Christ. Most of them should be honored that you think enough of them to invite them to this special occasion. Pray for your friends, that they would accept your invitation to attend, and that God would speak to them during the service and that they would respond to Him.

You will receive a Certificate of Baptism on the day of your baptism

PREPARING YOUR STORY

Three Parts

1. Before—life before you became a Christ follower
2. How—the path you took to become a Christ follower
3. After—the changes in your new life

Before

Include both the positive and negative aspects of your life. For example:

- The positive may be your desire to excel, concern for others, hard worker, raised in a good home, etc.
- The negative aspects might be that you were selfish, greedy, had a bad temper, or rebelled against the ways of God.
- Be real. The struggles you experienced help others who are having similar challenges in their lives to relate with you.

How

Share the ***good news*** in your story. Tell how you realized you have a sinful / broken nature, how you need Jesus' forgiveness, and how you invited God into your life. This is an opportunity to explain to others how to become a Christ follower.

After

Name two or three benefits of being a Christ follower and how you are now more enabled to take on a life that is filled with the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 6:22).

- Make it sound conversational; use informal vocabulary.
- Use "I" and "we", not "you". Share, don't preach.
- Share humorous situations if they were a part of your life.
- Simplify, avoid wordiness, and get directly to the point.
- Use the name of people who were a part of your decision.
- Use word pictures to describe a situation so it can be visualized.
- Your leader will read your story before the day of your baptism, and some people may be asked to read their story publicly.

MY STORY

MY FAVORITE VERSE:

MY LIFE BEFORE I FOUND CHRIST:

HOW AND WHEN I LET JESUS CHRIST BE THE LEADER AND SAVIOR OF MY LIFE:

WHAT IS MY LIFE LIKE NOW:

- ☐ I would like _____ to baptize me
- ☐ I would like Pastor Duane Bower to baptize me

POINTS TO REMEMBER

The date of your Baptism Service is: _____

Remember to have a pair of shorts and a dark blue or black plain T-shirt to be baptized in.

Remember to bring a change of clothes and a towel.

Be sure to turn in your “My Story” sheet a week before your baptism.

If you have any questions after reading this packet, please call Duane Bower at 647-7750 or email at duane@epic-community.org.