

Baptism

A brief description for those preparing to be baptized.

By

Nick Vleisides, Pastor, Creekside Community Church

How exciting it is to be baptized! It only means one thing. You have become a child of God and have entered into a new life where God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit supply everything you need to have a rich life of meaning, purpose and joy! Read chapter one of Ephesians to capture how special your life is to God. You are now a “saint” ...made holy and righteous through your new identification with Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, baptism was meant to be a symbolic act associated closely with conversion. The act of baptism includes water, and at Creekside our regular method of baptism is what is called “full immersion.” That means you are completely submerged under water before you raised back up. Of course, the symbolism is rich as we consider our new life in Christ. You see, when we come to faith in Christ our old sin nature is pinned on that cross where Christ hung and we die to that old nature. That is the picture we see in being submerged under water.

You might think of the water as having a double meaning. First, it symbolizes our death to sin. If you were to stay under water for a long time you would indeed die (we promise you won't be held under longer than a second!). But when you rise up out of the water you are now symbolizing your new birth as a child of God which brings us to the second meaning. Water is always a symbol of cleansing. As you come up out of the water you are made clean. That is what we are in God's eyes through the sacrifice of Christ. We are now made holy and righteous. Blameless. Can you believe it?! It's true!

Now we walk in newness of life! Read Romans 6 to get a clear biblical picture of baptism. And notice that water is not mentioned in Romans 6. It's a dry passage, meaning that there is a spiritual reality in our lives that water can not make happen. Only by the Spirit of God through our faith in Christ are we transformed and made new. Christ is now at the helm of our lives (read Galatians 2:20). Now we live in community with other “new creatures” and share in this wonderful life. This life was never meant to be lived alone. With Christ as our life we are now joined with other believers to actually be the “body of Christ” representing Him and His continuing work on this earth.

Read the article in this packet on baptism by Ray Stedman to gain a more detailed description of the meaning of baptism. Also, allow me to address to common questions that often arise when baptism is requested.

If you were baptized as a child so do you need to be baptized again?

We interpret the scriptures to show that baptism was only meant to be associated with conversion—a conscious, intelligent, heartfelt decision to put one’s faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Some of us grew up in traditions where infant baptism was practiced. We would encourage and permit, but not require, that someone who has been baptized as an infant choose to experience “believer’s baptism.” At Creekside, we do practice infant and child dedications where we dedicate ourselves and the children into the hands of God taking full responsibility to raise them up in the way of Christ.

How old does a child need to be in order to be baptized?

The key is understanding. Does the child have the mind to comprehend, even at a young age, what it means to put their faith and trust in Christ? Much discernment is required on behalf of the parent but if it is evident that the child, even if a simple childlike faith, understands the significance of their decision, then by all means, baptism in order. Generally, it is rare for a child under the age of 6 to comprehend a faith decision. We’ve seen that some children between the ages of 6-8 are ready to place their faith in God through Christ. Please talk to a church leader or a pastor if you have any questions or uncertainties about this. Even at a young age, if a child comes to faith and is baptized he or she will certainly remember the event all their life, even as they mature and grow deeper in their understanding later in life. It should always have meaning for them if they remember the occasion.

Final thoughts

We are so glad you consider yourself or your child ready for baptism. Let us help you if you need more information or a clearer understanding of baptism. Remember, baptism is a very simple act symbolizing something far greater which has occurred within your heart and mind. Something supernatural. A new life in Christ. May you be blessed by being one with Christ!

Nick Vleisides