

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Christian baptism is the activity of the local church immersing a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried and risen Savior; the believer's death to sin; the burial of the old life; and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony of the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

Common Questions:

Does baptism save me?

Baptism is not salvific; it does not save you. Salvation is exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ. There are no works through which saving grace is received. Baptism is necessary to display one's salvation but not for one's salvation. In other words, baptism is obedience and a saved person longs to obey, but baptism does not save you.

- **Ephesians 2:8-9:** For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — not from works, so that no one can boast (HCSB).

Do I receive the Holy Spirit when I am baptized?

According to the Bible, a person receives the Holy Spirit when he or she believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, upon conversion. Since a Christian has already received the Holy Spirit in conversion, he or she does not also receive the Holy Spirit when he or she is baptized.

- **Acts 10:47-48:** "Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days (HCSB).

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Since baptism expresses faith in Jesus, biblical baptism is only for those who believe. Christians believe that Jesus' death on the cross, His shed blood and His resurrection from the dead provide the sole basis for the forgiveness of sins. Salvation occurs only when a person places his or her faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the sufficient payment for his or her sin. If you believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, then you are ready to be baptized.

- **Romans 3:23:** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (HCSB).
- **Romans 5:8:** But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! (HCSB).
- **Romans 6:23:** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (HCSB).
- **Romans 10:9-10:** If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation (HCSB).
- **John 3:36:** The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him (HCSB).
- **Acts 4:12:** There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it (HCSB).

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Common Questions:

What if I was baptized before but don't think I was really saved?

Make sure that you understand what it means to be saved. If you understand what it means to follow Jesus, and you know that you have not been baptized since making that decision, then you should be baptized. What you did before your decision was not biblical baptism.

What if I was baptized in a different denomination?

- Baptism at FBG has more to do with Scripture than with a denomination. Although our denominational alliances with the Southern Baptist denomination impact many areas of our church, baptism is a response to Scripture's clear directives. If you were baptized in a different denomination then Scripture is our guide. If you were baptized as Scripture directs — by immersion under the authority of the local church after your faith in Jesus Christ, as an expression of that faith, in obedience to Jesus' commands and you believed that your baptism was not salvific — then you were baptized with Christian baptism. What is good by Scripture is good by FBG. If you were baptized by a denomination that holds a different definition of salvation and/or baptism, then your baptism was not biblical. You should be baptized biblically.
- Different modes of baptism used by other denominations, such as sprinkling, are not considered to be biblical modes of baptism. If you were baptized by sprinkling then you should be baptized by immersion after your faith in Jesus Christ, as an expression of that faith, in obedience to Jesus' commands.

ACT OF OBEDIENCE

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commanded His followers to go into all the world and make disciples. It is in this passage we find Jesus' command to baptize. The command was given in a way that baptism would become an ongoing practice in the church. We also see baptism in response to Jesus' command modeled in the book of Acts, the description of the early days of the New Testament church. In Acts, whenever a person made a decision to follow Jesus, that person was baptized. Baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord and obedience is a fruit of loving God.

- **Acts 2:41-42:** So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers (HCSB).
- **Acts 16:30-33:** Then he escorted them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." Then they spoke the message of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized (HCSB).

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Common Question:

What if I don't want to be baptized?

Failing to be baptized is serious. Jesus commanded His followers to be baptized. If you have decided to follow Jesus then obeying His commands is the expression of that decision. Baptism is the way for believers to show the world their identification with Jesus. Salvation and baptism are woven together in Scripture so that they are inseparable. In the New Testament church, it would have been unthinkable for someone to profess to be a follower of Jesus and then miss the opportunity to honor the Lord in believer's baptism.

- **Matthew 3:13-17 (see also Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22):** Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. But John tried to stop Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to me?" Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him to be baptized. After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him. And there came a voice from heaven: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him! (HCSB).

SYMBOL

Baptism is a way of demonstrating to others that you have decided to follow Jesus Christ. Baptism symbolizes what took place in your life at the time of salvation. It symbolizes that you are following Jesus as your Lord and Savior. It also shows that you have shared in His death and resurrection. When you go under the water you depict that you are dead to your old way of life, and when you come out of the water you depict that you are living a new life through your relationship with Jesus Christ. Baptism also symbolizes that you were cleansed from your sin through faith in Jesus Christ because He died for you. Not only have you been cleansed from your sin but you have been delivered from God's wrath. Baptism is a picture of your union with Christ and with His body, the church.

- **Romans 6:3-5:** Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life. For if we have been joined with Him in the likeness of His death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of His resurrection (HCSB).
- **Colossians 2:12:** Having been buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (HCSB).

Common Question:

What if I want to be baptized in a river or a pool or somewhere other than in the church?

The Bible provides stories of different locations where people were baptized while remaining consistent with the intent and purpose of the baptisms. So more important than the location is seeking to maintain the intent and purpose of baptism as laid out in the Scriptures. Baptism is a step of obedience, but it also has meaning as a public witness to others of Christ's work in your life as well as encouragement to and identification with the body of Christ. Since baptism is administered under the authority of the local church, it makes sense that the members of the local church would participate with you in the celebration of your baptism. So as the local church gathers together to worship the Lord, it is a clear opportunity to administer and celebrate baptisms as a part of the body of Christ. This helps connect the communal aspects of faith in Christ as seen in Scripture with your baptism. If the church gathered at the river to worship and celebrate together that would be a natural place for baptisms to take place. The key is not the place, but the best practice is to seek to make the most of your baptism as a member of the local church to encourage other followers of Christ and to bear witness to anyone who does not yet know Christ. This is simply the best, most biblical practice we can see, but it does not negate someone's baptism if he or she was baptized in a private setting.

WITNESS

Baptism is a public witness or confession of your personal decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. It is through baptism that you testify of your faith that Jesus is your Savior, your Lord and will return for those who have trusted in Him. As you confess your surrender to Jesus and what the Lord has done in your life, it is an opportunity for you to encourage others to love God because Jesus has done the same for them.

Common Questions:

What if I was baptized as an infant?

Biblical baptism is not something that an unbeliever or an infant can do. Since baptism is an expression of one's personal faith, then only those who have believed can be baptized with Christian baptism. If you were baptized as an infant, it may have been an important religious exercise for your parents, but it was not biblical baptism for you. If you have made a decision to follow Jesus, then you need to be baptized as a believer in Jesus.

How old do I need to be to be baptized?

There is no age requirement for baptism. Baptism is an act of obedience, expressing your personal decision to follow Jesus Christ. Even though there is no age requirement, the requirement of a personal decision of faith would have bearing on the age of those the church would baptize. Sufficient evidence for that personal decision should be portrayed in the life of any child desiring baptism. In order to assist parents in leading their children to be baptized after their personal decision of faith and conversion, any child under the age of 10 desiring to be baptized must meet, along with his or her parents, with one of our pastors for guidance in this decision.

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HOW DO WE BAPTIZE?

IMMERSION

The word “baptism” in Greek, the language of the New Testament, means “to immerse.” In addition to the meaning of the word, Scripture’s description of baptism is also instructive. In Acts 8:36-38, Philip was sharing about salvation with the Ethiopian eunuch and the eunuch believed. When he saw some water he asked, “What prevents me from being baptized?” They stopped the chariot; they both “went down into the water” and the eunuch was baptized. Likewise, John 3:23 speaks of baptizing in a location because the water was plentiful. Going ‘down into the water’ and ‘plentiful water’ both reflect baptism by immersion.

- **John 3:22-23:** After this, Jesus and His disciples went to the Judean countryside, where He spent time with them and baptized. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were coming and being baptized, (HCSB).
- **Acts 8:35-39:** So Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning from that Scripture. As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water! What would keep me from being baptized?” And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer. But he went on his way rejoicing (HCSB).

Common Question:

Who can baptize?

The local church is the administrator of biblical baptism. Because baptism is an ordinance of the local church, it is under the leadership of the local church that believers are baptized. Anyone designated by the leadership of the local church to baptize can administer the ordinance of baptism.

STEPS TO BAPTISM

These are the steps in FBG’s baptism process:

1. Please notify the church office regarding your baptism decision and availability for the scheduled baptism service (512.869.2586).
2. Tell your story. Your story is your testimony of your decision to follow Jesus Christ, trusting in Him for the forgiveness of your sins. Although every story is unique, each one should have at least three points in common: your life before Christ, your decision to follow Christ and your life after deciding to follow Christ. The most important of these descriptions is your decision to follow Christ and what that decision means for your life now. Because your story will be a great encouragement to our church, to others who need to be baptized and also to those who have not yet decided to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we will help you be able to share your story. Learning how to tell your story is a step of discipleship and obedience. The Lord has called each follower of Christ to tell others about Jesus and your story of God’s work in your life is one of the best ways to show others you love them and want them to be able to love God the way you do. Each person being baptized will be asked to record a video of his or her salvation story to play during the baptism service.

3. Use the space at the back of this book to write out your testimony. Once your story is written, email it to Teaching Pastor Curt Sparkman at csparkman@bcgt.org.
4. You will be contacted to schedule a time to film your video testimony. To help prepare you for this step, please be familiar with your story and be ready to tell it without the use of notes.
5. On the day of your scheduled baptism service, you will need to be present in the front entryway of the sanctuary by the stairs (through the doors by the stage on the right if you're looking at the stage) 15 minutes before the start of the service. You will need to bring with you a pair of dark shorts, your necessary toiletries and we will provide you with a dark T-shirt. Towels will be provided, but you can also bring your own.

BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A person becomes a member of FBG when he or she has made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and has been baptized by immersion as a testimony of salvation. We strongly recommend before becoming a member that every person go through the Discover FBG class to get a better understanding of who we are as a church, the expectations of members and how the church provides care and accountability for the members. Involvement in a local church is also obedience to Jesus, and anyone desiring to be baptized should seek out a local church in which to serve, worship, grow and learn.

Common Question:

What if I don't want to join the church?

Baptism is obedience to Christ. As a result of your decision to follow Christ you are a member of the body of Christ, the church universal. The expression of the universal church is the local church. Your baptism is also a confession of that reality. In the same way that salvation and baptism are inseparable in Scripture, so also are membership in the body of Christ and membership/participation in a local church. Local church membership/participation is also obedience to Jesus Christ. Baptism is a decision that means that membership/participation in a local church as a follower of Jesus Christ is not an option. Baptism is both an expression of loving God and loving people.

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TELL YOUR STORY

Keep in mind these three sections:

Your life before Jesus Christ ...

Your decision to follow Jesus Christ ...

Your life since believing in Jesus Christ ...

