

Baptism: Taking the Next Step in Following Jesus

Welcome to an exciting step in your Christian life! Baptism is the mark of one who has been washed and is now walking in a relationship with Jesus.

This material is designed to assist you in preparing for this very special event. Begin praying now that God would give you the courage to follow through with your baptism and to invite friends and family to witness your baptism.

History of Christian Baptism

1. God delivers the nation of Israel through the waters and brings them a new life and freedom from slavery and oppression.

- *“Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.” (Exodus 14:21-22)*

2. Part of preparing the Jewish Priests for service.

- In Leviticus 8:5-6 God was preparing those who would lead the people spiritually. They were called to be set apart for God’s purposes. Holy. *“Moses said to the assembly, ‘This is what the Lord has commanded to be done.’ Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.”*

3. Converts to Judaism were to be washed as a symbol that their old way of living was washed away and a new way to live under the covenant of God was their commitment.

4. The Essene community (where they discover the Dead Sea Scrolls) had set themselves apart from general society in order to pursue righteousness and purity. They often baptized daily as a reminder of new life.

5. John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, was called to baptize to prepare people for the Messiah. It was a baptism that was symbolic of repentance and readiness to receive the Savior.

- *“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’” (John 3:1-2)*
- *“People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.” (John 3:5-6)*

6. Jesus’ baptism is recorded for us in all four gospels (His birth is found only in two)!

- *“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 3:16-17)*
- *“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11)*
- *“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)*
- *“Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34)*

7. Jesus’ last command to his disciples was to baptize as a means of making followers.

- *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him but some doubted. 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.” (Matthew 28:18-20)*

8. The day the Holy Spirit was given, three-thousand people responded by believing in Jesus and being baptized.

- *“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:41)*

9. The early church practiced baptism as a means of receiving someone into the Family of God.

- *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and*

the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38)

- *"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name...Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days." (Acts 10:43, 47-48)*

The Meaning of Baptism:

Baptize means "to wash".

Baptism is God's method of publicly identifying that we are followers of Jesus Christ and a part of his community called "the Church". It is a symbolic representation of putting our faith in Christ alone for our salvation. Our sins have been washed through the forgiveness of Christ and we are made new to live out the Kingdom of God on earth.

Baptism by immersion most closely reflects the symbolism of being buried with Christ and raised to live a new life.

- *"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)*

The Benefits of Baptism

1. Pleases God through your obedience and faith.
2. Encourages other followers of Christ by sharing your spiritual journey.
3. Lead others to a relationship with God.

What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons.

- *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Sharing Your Faith Journey

Learning to share with others what Christ is doing in your life is an important part of your baptism. God can use your story to help others to begin seeking God. Following

your baptism, we will schedule a time for you to record your story for our congregation.

Don't wait for your baptism to share what God has done for you through Jesus! Many followers of Jesus began sharing their story with One Life immediately after they believed!

- *“The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:41-45)*

Begin to pray about One Life (someone that does not know the forgiveness of Christ) that is a friend or family member and ask God to give you opportunity to share what he has done for you! Then invite them to your baptism to witness this step of faith.

Instructions for the Day of Baptism

1. Meet out in the lobby 20 minutes prior to the service in which you will be baptized.
2. Bring a towel and complete change of clothes.
3. Wear casual, dark colored clothes that can get wet and are not easily seen through.
4. Based on Romans 10:9, You will be asked by one of the ministers if you confess with your mouth that “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.” Your response should be “yes”.

Baptism FAQ'S:

1. Does the Wesleyan Church believe one must be baptized to be saved?
 - No, the Bible makes it clear that we are not saved based on the works we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *“God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”*
2. What if I was baptized as an infant?
 - There is no reason to be baptized a second time unless your first baptism was too young to remember.
3. How should I explain my faith journey if I became a Christian as a young child, but

then recommitted my life later?

- Briefly mention becoming a Christian as a child, but focus on the changes and events that happened later in life leading up to your recommitment.