

THE BAPTISM PROCESS

As you prepare to celebrate the most important decision of your life, we are excited and honored to walk through it with you.

We've attempted to create a baptism process at Port City that is both simple and meaningful to the person marking an important spiritual moment in their life. From the baptism booklet to the baptism meeting with us, each step has been thought through with you in mind. The basic process for someone interested in being baptized is as follows:

- 1) Read through this baptism booklet and listen to the CD baptism message by Mike Ashcraft, so that you can understand more clearly what scripture has to say about salvation and the act of baptism.
- 2) Write your story! We created a section in this booklet entitled "Telling Your Story" to aid you in shaping your story. Once it's done, send it to pc3baptism@portcitychurch.org along with a phone number at which we can reach you!
- 3) We will schedule a consultation with you in which we talk with you more about your desire to be baptized. Please bring your booklet when you meet with us!
- 4) Once we receive your story and schedule a meeting with you, we will schedule you for the next available baptism date as well as the date on which we'll be doing video interviews. Video interviews last about 45 minutes.
**Please note: If illness or schedule conflicts interfere with the baptism date and/or the video interview date, we will reschedule you for the following available baptism!*
- 5) Come in on the day of video interviews to share your story! Be sure to practice your story before the interview so that you are comfortable with it!
- 6) Get baptized! Baptisms may take place during ANY of the Sunday services, so ensure that your family and friends plan accordingly. Please wear dark clothes and bring a change of clothes, a plastic bag for wet items, and a towel. We encourage you to invite your family, friends, and small group to celebrate this spiritual milestone! Your family and friends may take pictures during your baptism, but please ask them not to take pictures while your video is playing, as the flash can be distracting!
- 7) After your baptism day, we will e-mail you a link to access your baptism video. You can feel free to send this link to family and friends so that they can also see your video!

If you have any questions or concerns about the baptism process, please contact us at pc3baptism@portcitychurch.org

Baptism: An Outward Expression of an Inner Change

Life at its core is about moments strung together. Each moment creates a piece in the puzzle that makes up a person's story. The act of baptism is a unique moment in your story, because three events are celebrated at once: a funeral, a birth, and a marriage ceremony all in one.

Funeral:

Saying farewell to your old self as it is washed away

Birth:

A new life and identity emerging from the waters

Marriage:

A vow before family and friends pledging your commitment to Christ

Before going into greater detail about baptism, we want to spend some time focusing on what this act is celebrating: *our salvation*.

Understanding Salvation

The first step towards following Jesus is accepting Him as our Savior. To understand what this means, and why we need a Savior, read the verses below and answer the questions that follow:

God is a good and loving God

Read **John 3:16**. In what ways would you say that God is loving and good according to this verse?

Everyone has sinned

Romans 3:23 tells us that we all “fall short of the glory of God,” which means we’ve all sinned. What are some examples in which you’ve “fallen short of the glory of God?”

The wages of sin is death

When we sin, why can’t God just forgive us? **Romans 6:23** tells us that sin leads to death. God is a just God, which means he can’t ignore or forget when we sin, and that all sins must be punished.

Jesus died for our sins

In **Romans 5:8** and **John 3:16** we learn that God loves us so much that he gave his Son to die for us – Jesus took the blame for the sins we’ve committed. Instead of being punished for our sins, God allowed His Son, Jesus, to be punished in our place.

The gift of salvation

Read **Ephesians 2:8-9** and **Titus 3:5** together; these verses tell us that we didn’t earn the gift that God gave us in Jesus. Think of the last time you received a gift – did you do anything to earn it? What did it feel like to receive a free gift?

Have you received Christ?

Now that you’ve had a chance to process why God sent Jesus to save us, this might be your opportunity to receive Jesus as your Savior if you haven’t already. You can do this with a friend, your spouse, your small group leader, or even on your own. Simply pray something similar to the prayer below. (Remember, it isn’t the prayer that saves you, but faith in Jesus as your Savior. Prayer is just talking to God.)

“Lord, I know that I have sinned in my life, and because you always do what you say, all those sins must be paid for. I believe you sent Jesus to die on the cross to pay for those sins for me. Right now I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior. Thank you, and help me to walk with you. Amen.”

Baptism: Understanding This Important Decision

Baptism is an outward expression that a person has begun a new life in Jesus Christ. It symbolizes what has taken place inwardly when you received Christ as your savior and accepted God's grace. When you joined the PC3 community you entered into a communal walk with God. As a community, we believe in celebrating the spiritual steps our members take while seeking God.

We want to take a few moments to help you gain a better understanding of the biblical meaning of baptism.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. To Follow the Example Set by Christ

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River He was displaying His willingness to be obedient to God's will. From the very beginning, He was serving as the perfect example for the submissive lifestyle that should define our days.

Mark 1:9-11 (New International Version)

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

2. To Obey What Christ Commands

Baptism can be viewed as an act of obedience because Jesus instructed us to be baptized. It is not necessary in order to be saved, but rather it is a demonstration of our submission to God.

Matthew 28:19-20 (New International Version)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

3. To Demonstrate Your Submission To God

At Port City, we like to describe baptism as an "outward expression of an inner change." Others use the imagery of a marriage ceremony to describe what takes place at baptism. In a wedding, the bride and groom stand before family and friends and take vows pledging their life to the other. They exchange rings to signify the commitment they have made. Once you've accepted Jesus as your Savior, baptism is a way to tell everyone about the decision. Throughout the beginnings of the early church found in the book of Acts, baptism always came after an individual's decision to trust Christ for salvation (Acts 2:41, 10:47-48 and 18:8).

Acts 8:34-38 (New International Version)

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 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?" 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

How is baptism an outward expression of an inner change? How does this act symbolize our submission and obedience to God?

WHAT DOES BAPTISM SYMBOLIZE?

I. It Illustrates Christ's Burial And Resurrection

Baptism in the Bible was viewed as an act in which one proclaimed a new association with a particular group or certain message. This act was practiced by early believers to show others that one had entered into a new relationship with Christ – it symbolized scriptural cleansing that took place when the person was saved. They shared in Christ's death by submerging beneath the water, while illustrating his resurrection by rising up from the water.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (New International Version)

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Colossians 2:12 (New International Version)

12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

After reading the verses above, describe what baptism illustrates for you.

2. It Symbolizes My New Life As A Christian

Baptism symbolizes what took place in your heart at the time of salvation. Because we have shared in His death our old sin nature has died (funeral) and we have become a new creation in Christ (birth). Think back to the passage in Ephesians 2 that you read earlier. In these verses, Paul speaks about the drastic changes that take place within us when we accept what Christ did on the cross and decide to walk with Him. This change has nothing to do with us being good in our own power, but everything to do with Christ being able to transform us.

Romans 6:1-4 (New International Version)

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** 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.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (New International Version)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

In what area(s) of your life do you struggle to see your new identity in Christ? What causes you to hold on to this way of thinking about yourself?

WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

The word “baptize” originates from the Greek word “baptizo” which means to “immerse or dip under water.” At Port City, we baptize people by immersion due to the symbolism and because it is the biblical model seen throughout the New Testament. Christ was baptized this way (Matthew 3:16) and every baptism in the Bible was by immersion (Acts 8:38-39). We also feel that immersion paints the clearest picture of dying to sin and being made alive in Christ.

What are the main points the Bible Makes about Baptism?

- 1) Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ.
- 2) Baptism always comes after an individual’s decision to trust Christ for salvation.
- 3) Baptism doesn’t make you a believer, but rather demonstrates that you already believe.
- 4) Baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 5) Baptism provides the opportunity for believers to profess their allegiance to Christ in the midst of their faith community.

Have you ever been baptized? If so, under what circumstances did it occur? Briefly describe your reasons for wanting to be baptized now.

TELLING YOUR STORY

Where do I start? What information should I include or leave out? What should I say? These are some of the questions that are probably running through your head when you are asked to tell your story of faith. Please understand that your story does not need to be elaborate, long or include too much detail. You should be able to share your story in 2-4 minutes (which is about one-half to a full typed page). We've provided a brief block outline to help you in writing out your story.

Take some time now to write out your story using the outline below.

The Before:

Introduce yourself and tell a fact or two about yourself (ex. My name is Sarah and I am 34 years old and a mother of 3, my name is Chuck and I am a student at UNCW, etc.) Then, briefly describe your life as it pertains to your spiritual journey and relationship with God BEFORE you accepted Christ's salvation. Try to only include stories that are pertinent to bringing you to the point when you accepted Christ. Remember, this story is about your new association with Christ more than how "bad" you once were.

Your Awareness:

Describe the event(s) that led up to you becoming aware of the yearnings you experienced for something more, namely your need for Christ. It could have been a situation you faced, something you heard during church service, a small group or any number of things.

Your Alignment:

Share what finally moved you to decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation and trust Him as your forgiver and leader. Feel free to share if a certain person was instrumental in helping you find Christ or sort out your thoughts and feelings while facing this decision.

Your Walk:

Share how you are walking with God now and what your journey looks like present day. More importantly, share WHY you want to be baptized.