

***Baptism at  
Good News Bible Chapel***



Thank you for inquiring about baptism at Good News Bible Chapel. Baptism is the first step in obedience as a follower of Jesus and an exciting milestone in your life as a Christian, and we look forward to sharing this event with you. This letter gives a few details about baptism and outlines the process for scheduling your baptism.

### **What Is Baptism?**

Baptism is an outward sign that a person has entered into a saving, transforming relationship with Jesus. It symbolizes what took place inwardly at the time of salvation:

- Repenting of sin and accepting Jesus as Savior from the penalty of sin and Lord, leader of your life.
- Sharing in His death and resurrection to new life.
- Being symbolically washed clean.

Because Jesus instructed us to be baptized (Matthew 28:19), baptism is also the primary act of obedience to Him. While it is not necessary for salvation—salvation is by God’s grace through faith alone (John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 2:8)—baptism demonstrates your obedience and submission to God.

### **What The Bible Says About Baptism**

The Greek word for baptism, βαπτίζω, pronounced *bap-tid-zo*, literally means to immerse, wash, bathe, dip, submerge, or dunk, and this is the word used to describe Jesus’ own baptism by John the Baptist that we can read about in Matthew 3:13-17. Because Jesus modeled this act for us, we follow His example by being baptized by immersion in water. A person has not been baptized as explained in the Bible if she/he was christened as an infant or a child, before beginning a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Baptism At Good News Bible Chapel**

Everyone who gets baptized at GNBC follows these four steps:

1. Read the attached *Baptism FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions About Baptism*.
2. Complete the baptism application and return it to any of the elders: Brian Houghton, Craig Fabbo, Darian Medeiros, Mike Sherrod, or Steve DuPlessie
3. Attend the multi-session baptism class (usually 2-4 sessions) to learn what the bible says about baptism, get your questions answered, and get coaching on how to prepare your story in a written testimony of how God saved you.
4. Share that written testimony and get baptized during one of the *Celebration & Growth* services.

### **Your Story**

Baptism is a public profession of your faith, and reading your testimony (in person or on video) at your baptism—we like to call it your “before and after story”—allows you to share with everyone the story of how God saved you in a short and simple way. We have found that this written testimony becomes very meaningful to those being baptized as well as for those attending the service.

Please let any of us know if you have any questions or concerns, or if we can walk you through the process in greater detail. We look forward to celebrating your baptism with you!

Yours in Christ,  
The Elders of GNBC

## **Baptism FAQ...**

### **Frequently asked questions about baptism**

#### ***Q – Why should I be baptized?***

**A** – There are two good reasons why all believers in Jesus Christ should be baptized. First, Jesus commanded that the apostles should baptize all new disciples “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (see Matthew 28:19). So being baptized as a follower of Jesus is the first step of obedience to his command.

Second, the early church always baptized those who believed in Jesus as their Savior and Lord (Acts 2:41; 8:26-39; 9:18). Since then, for over 2,000 years—all around the world—followers of Jesus have been baptized. We join a very long parade when we follow the example of those who have gone before us by being baptized. So our baptism is something that we share with other Bible-believing Christians around the world.

#### ***Q – What does baptism mean?***

**A** – The English word “baptism” comes directly from the Greek word “*baptizo*” which simply means to “wash,” “bathe,” “dunk,” “dip,” “plunge,” “submerge,” or “immerse” (See Luke 11:38 where the English word “wash” is used to translate the Greek “*baptizo*”). Originally, *baptizo* had no theological or religious connotation. Rather, the word *baptizo* was used in every day conversation to describe a piece of cloth that was dipped in dye or a ship that had been sunk in a battle or. Other times it was used to refer to someone who had drowned or a cup that was dipped into a pitcher to drink from.

There is a second way in which the term “baptize” was used in the Jewish faith. The Jews developed a way in which Gentiles could become Jewish. It involved a number of things, including circumcision, a covenant meal, the agreement to obey Jewish law, and a ritual bath. The term used to describe that ritual bath was *bapto*, meaning to “wash,” “dip,” or “immerse.” The person who desired to become Jewish would baptize themselves. The “bath” was an outward sign that they were washing away the old Gentile life and dying to the old life as a Gentile and were being resurrected to the new life as a Jew. As a pledge of allegiance to the new identity, those who desired to adopt the Jewish faith as their own participated by baptizing themselves as a sign of their commitment.

What happened next involved John the Baptist—the prophet who came to announce that Jesus had arrived. John got his name because of what people saw him doing. His unique role of baptizing other people was something that had never been done before, so it was natural that people came to watch. He was literally “John the Washer.” The baptism by John the Baptist was a “baptism of repentance,” demonstrating publicly that the individual was turning away from their sin. John took an ordinary word that meant to “wash,” “dip,” “plunge,” “submerge,” or “immerse,” and coined it for the specific task he was performing. Soon it became almost exclusively associated with Christianity, and thus the word baptism appears in the New Testament part of your bible.

The apostle Paul explains the new meaning of baptism for Christians, for believers, for followers of Jesus: “...all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. 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...” (Romans 6:1-7).

To summarize: Christian baptism is a public demonstration of (1) believing/trusting personally in the death and resurrection of Jesus for your salvation, and (2) leaving the old life behind, and beginning a

new life with a new identity as a Jesus-follower. It is an outward public illustration of what has already happened spiritually “inside” us.

***Q – Do I have to be baptized to be saved? Does baptism save me?***

**A** – A few verses in the New Testament appear—in isolation—to imply that baptism is what saves you (Acts 2:38; 22:16). But there are a number of New Testament passages that clearly indicate that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

First, Jesus said “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Notice that Jesus did not mention baptism as a requirement for salvation.

Second is the example of Jesus’ conversation with the dying thief on the cross. Jesus said “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42, 43). The thief had no time to be baptized, yet was saved.

Third, when the apostle Paul explains the gospel that he preached that saved the Corinthians, he did not include baptism: “...I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, ... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...” (1 Cor. 15:1-4ff). Salvation is by God’s grace through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), not anything that we do.

***Q – What about the “How?” Why do we go under the water in the tank?***

**A** – The tank itself is not important. And actually the “How?” is not as important as the “Why?”. But we immerse, dip, dunk, sink people in water because that is what the word *baptizo* means. Jesus himself was baptized—dipped, immersed, dunked—by John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:13-17) in the Jordan River.

And baptism by immersion is a powerful illustration of the fact that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again for us! So we go under the water and then we rise up again—a cool symbolic picture that tells everyone “When Jesus died, I died. When he rose again, I rose to new life!” See Romans 6:1-7.

By being baptized, you are personally identifying with Jesus and what He did for you when He died on the cross to pay the full penalty for your sins that His righteous holy Father demanded, and identifying with His burial, and His resurrection.

***Q – If I was baptized at an early age and didn’t accept Christ Jesus until later, should I be re-baptized? When should a new believer get baptized?***

**A** – First, about re-baptism. In Acts 19:1-7 we read of those who had received the baptism of John, but who had not been baptized as believers in Jesus Christ (nor had the Holy Spirit yet come upon them). These folks were re-baptized in the name of Jesus when they understood the truth about Jesus.

From Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19 and the examples in the Book of Acts we understand that every believer ought to be baptized. It is also clear that one is to be baptized *as a believer*. Other texts such as Romans 6:3ff seem to indicate that every believer would have (or should have) been baptized as a believer. If you have not yet been baptized as a believer—even if you came to faith years ago— you should be baptized.

***Q – Should infants be baptized?***

**A** – The short answer is no. Here’s why: First, there is no account in the New Testament of an infant being baptized. Second, water baptism is an evidence of one’s personal faith and understanding of the truths of

Romans 6 as they demonstrate the results of our being united with or joined into union with Christ by the baptizing work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Infants cannot grasp this truth and baptizing an infant cannot ensure they will one day respond to Christ by faith.

Acts 16:31 is a good illustration of the need of personal, individual faith for all members of one's household. "And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.'" The words, "and your household," must be connected with "believe" as well as "be saved." Each member of the household must believe in order to be saved. There is no evidence that this household included infants. So we practice "believer's baptism" at Good News.

Some see infant baptism as the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew rite of circumcision—an initiation into the *New Covenant*. The plain reading of the New Testament does not teach this "covenant" approach to baptism. And there is no example of infant baptism in the New Testament. The apostle Paul teaches that God wants not the physical circumcision of the flesh but the spiritual "circumcision of the heart" (Romans 2:28). So we "dedicate" infants—but do not do infant baptism.

### ***Q – What are the historical origins of infant baptism?***

**A** – As the church was in an evangelistic mode in the first three centuries we find clear statements of the fact of believers' baptism upon conversion. But in the ancient church there arose the concept that baptism was the initiation rite into the community of faith (like circumcision), and some thought that infants born into that community are to be baptized.

A second factor appears to have been the rise of the idea of original sin and the belief that baptism "washed away the stain of original sin". Third, the ordinances of baptism and communion very early were understood as actually "conveying God's grace" and accomplishing something spiritually. We find explicit mention of infant baptism by Tertullian around A.D. 220. He mentions the practice in conjunction with sponsors who would aid in the child's spiritual training which appears to be the origin of the practice of "godparents."

There is a helpful paragraph from Phillip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church* regarding baptism in the ancient church:

"In reviewing the patristic doctrine of baptism ... we should remember that during the first three centuries, and even in the age of Constantine, adult baptism was the rule, and that the actual conversion of the candidate was required as a condition before administering the sacrament (as is still the case on missionary ground). ... But when the same high view is applied without qualification to infant baptism, we are confronted at once with the difficulty that infants cannot comply with this condition. They may be regenerated (this being an act of God), but they cannot be converted, *i.e.*, they cannot repent and believe, nor do they need repentance, having not yet committed any actual transgression. Infant baptism is an act of consecration, and looks to subsequent instruction and personal conversion, as a condition to full membership of the church. Hence confirmation later came in as a supplement to infant baptism."

### ***Q – Must I be baptized to join a church?***

**A** – The short answer is "No." There is a very delicate balance that we must maintain here. In the Book of Acts—the record of the beginning of the Christian churches—you do not see anyone coming to faith without being baptized (for example the new converts in Acts 2:41; the new believers in Samaria in Acts 8:13, 16; the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36-39; Paul in Acts 9:18; those in the household of Cornelius in Acts 10:47-48). In terms of the Book of Acts it is inconceivable that one would come to faith in Christ and not be baptized.

In some countries and cultures today a profession of faith is not taken seriously apart from baptism—it's at your baptism that persecution begins. While holding to the necessity of baptism as an act of obedience (Matthew 28:18-20, underscored and reinforced by the example and practice of the Apostles as we see in the Book of Acts), we must also be on guard against making baptism the means of salvation. Salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone—not any form of spiritual works or rituals.

***Q – What was John the Baptist promising his followers when he baptized them?***

**A** – John the Baptist was the forerunner of our Lord. As the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets, he was announcing that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament was soon coming. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4), an acknowledgement of sin, and of the need for the forgiveness of sins—which Messiah (the "Lamb of God") would bring about.

So John's baptism was the symbol of their acknowledgement of sin, and of their need for a Savior. It was a preparatory baptism, but (as we see in Acts 19:1-7) it did not eliminate the need for "believer's baptism" once they had come to faith in Jesus as that promised Messiah. This is why the church baptized all new believers, and why all believers today should be baptized as well.

**Resources:**

**Web site:** [http://www.Bible.org/topic.php?topic\\_id=62](http://www.Bible.org/topic.php?topic_id=62).

**Book:** *Baptism: the believer's first obedience.* By Larry Dyer. Kregle Publication. Available on Amazon.

# GNBC Baptism Application

*We believe that baptism is very important step of obedience for a follower of Jesus Christ. It is an outward sign of obedience and of the saving grace of God in the life of a believer. It is symbolic of salvation, not part of salvation. Since it is a symbol, we believe that only those professing a personal faith in Jesus as their Savior/Rescuer should be baptized.*

**Step 1:** Read the *Baptism FAQ* sheet (attached).

**Step 2:** Complete this baptism application. Please print clearly and be thorough.

**Step 3:** Return this baptism application (see the address below).

**Step 4:** We will contact you about an upcoming baptism class and the next scheduled baptism date.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birth Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please print out your email address clearly as this is how we will correspond with you about the baptism class and the next scheduled baptism date.

I have read the *Baptism FAQ* sheet. \_\_\_\_\_ (Initials)

Baptism is a public profession and symbolizes a death to our old life and your receiving new life through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Although everyone getting baptized is a sinner, new life in Christ should be seen in our daily life. Is your current lifestyle reflective of your new life in Christ?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ I would like to speak with someone \_\_\_

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1. Please state briefly how and when God saved you:

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2. If you died today and God were to ask you *why* you should be allowed into heaven, how would you answer?

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3. Why do you want to be baptized? Have you already been baptized before becoming a Christian?

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Please check one:  I am ready now to schedule my baptism.

I need to speak with someone before I am ready to schedule my baptism.

When you have completed this information, please give it to any of the Elders.

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