

BAPTISM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

Who should be baptized?

Anyone who believes Jesus is the Christ and is ready to repent of their sins and be united with Christ should be baptized. Jesus said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).

Acts 2:38-41; 8:12-13; 8:36-38; 9:18 with 22:16; 16:14,15, 16:30-33; 18:8, 19:1-5, Matthew 28:19

How should we be baptized?

To understand how we should be baptized, it is best to look at the meaning of the word. The Greeks had, and still have, a word for immerse, one for sprinkle and one for pour. *Baptizo* means “dip or immerse,” *rantizo* means to “sprinkle,” and *cheo* means to “pour.” This is now the meaning of these words in Greek and was also the meaning when Christ was on Earth. The Holy Scripture consistently uses the word *baptizo*, which means “immerse.”

Even scholars from churches accepting modes of baptism other than immersion will concede that immersion was the original form of baptism, and that sprinkling and pouring were adopted later in church history and were never authorized or practiced by the apostles or Christ.

Every Biblical example of baptism is by immersion. John the Baptist baptized where there was much water (John 3:23). Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water (Matthew 3). The Ethiopian went down into the water and came up out of the water (Acts 8). The Apostle Paul states that baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We are buried with Christ by baptism (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). At Northside, we baptize people by immersing them in water. This enacts, according to the teaching of Scripture, the burial of the old self and the resurrection of a new life with Christ.

Due to the Bible’s clarity on this, at Northside, we encourage everyone to be immersed and require our members to be immersed. Anyone sprinkled as an infant should be grateful that their parents cared about their spiritual condition. Their choice to be baptized by immersion does not condemn the faith of those who have gone before us, nor does it disrespect them. We are held accountable for the knowledge we have now. In order to have a good conscience you may feel prompted to be baptized by immersion.

When should we be baptized?

A person should be baptized at the time he or she trusts in Christ. The Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8); moreover in the New Testament church, baptism was not just a memorial of faith, but was intended to offer a means of union with Christ and a benchmark of transformation, marking the place and time a person made a commitment to Christ (Romans 6:1-8). At Northside, we ask a person to be baptized at the point that he or she is ready to make a commitment to Christ. (Also see Acts 2:36-41, Acts 8:34-39, Acts 9:17-19, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:29-34)

Baptism is significant because biblically it is connected to the conversion experience. Sin creates two problems for the sinner. Our sin makes us guilty and our sin makes us spiritually sick. The first people to hear the Gospel in Acts 2 came under conviction that they were guilty, and they were spiritually sick and asked, “What must we do?” Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39.

Peter named two things they must do: repent (turn back to God) and be baptized. He also names two things they would receive: forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words the two problems of guilt and sickness were resolved. They were forgiven and no longer guilty. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit and no longer powerless against sin’s effect. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

The Bible clearly teaches that a person should be baptized when he or she is capable of:

- Believing in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior
- Repenting of sin. The word for repent in the New Testament means “to change the mind.” A candidate for baptism must believe that Jesus alone can save a person from sin and intentionally decide to “change the mind” (i.e., repent) from sinful behavior.

Why should we be baptized?

As commanded by Christ, every believer should be baptized. It is essential to becoming a Christ follower (Matthew 28:19). Furthermore, through baptism we are following Christ’s example (Matthew 3:13-17), accepting forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), expressing trust in Christ (Acts 8:12-13), uniting with Christ (Romans 6:1-8), putting on Christ (Galatians 3:27), cutting off the sin nature (Colossians 2:11-12), and receiving a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21-22).

The Holy Spirit prompts individuals to recognize their sin and guilt, and the only way in which the human soul can be wiped clean of sin is through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:27-10:7). This “washing away” of sin is most clearly symbolized in the act of baptism (Acts 22:16). Peter, the apostle, makes this powerful statement: “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . .” (1 Peter 3:21).

Since one of the biggest obstacles between God and man is human pride, baptism also offers a venue by which believers humble themselves before God and others, and admit their need for Christ’s redemption (James 4:6). In addition, baptism meets a God-given human need for expression. Baptism is the scriptural expression of faith in Christ.

It is important to keep in mind the act of baptism alone cannot save an individual. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism is the point in time when we surrender completely to His Lordship of our lives. Apart from faith, baptism means nothing (Colossians 2:12).

Should a person ever be rebaptized?

Rebaptism is allowed for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism experience because they don’t remember it, they were coerced, their motives were not right or their heart was not right with God at the time. Anyone else who has fallen into sin after having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but rebaptism is not necessary (Acts 8:13-24).

Should a person be baptized before becoming a member at Northside?

Yes. Any person who has trusted in Jesus as the only Son of God and who has willingly been immersed into Christ may become a member of Northside Christian Church whether the baptism occurred at Northside or elsewhere

Must a person be baptized during a worship service?

The Bible provides several different settings for baptism. So baptism does not have to be during a worship service. However, we strongly encourage baptisms to take place when the body of Christ is together as a testimony to the faith community of your personal faith as well as a testimony to any who have not yet made the decision to be baptized. Your baptism is sure to have an impact on those watching. We encourage those who are baptized outside of a worship service to invite friends, family, especially those who are not yet Christians to witness your expression of faith.

SUMMARY

Paul exhorts all believers to unite, for we are all of “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). Regardless of our particular beliefs regarding the mode of baptism, it is important for all Christians to seek unity as representatives of Christ’s body. We believe the source of unity is the truth of God’s Word, and we pray that baptism will be a place of unity, not division, among believers (John 17:17-21).