

BAPTISM

FROM DEATH TO

Life

MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH

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# SO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BAPTISM?

The purpose of this short booklet is to provide you with a brief explanation on what the Bible teaches about baptism. Whether you're exploring Christianity, seeking to get baptized yourself, or just wanting to grow in your understanding of this important ordinance of the church, it is our prayer that this resource would help along those lines.

Baptism is ultimately a picture of how the gospel transforms lives. By "gospel" we mean the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel addresses the reality that we have all sinned against God. Every one of us has turned from God's ways to our own ways and that sin separates us from God. If we die in this state of separation from God, we will spend eternity separated from God. This is bad news for all of us.

BUT, God loves us and has done the unthinkable on our behalf! Though we all deserve death and eternal separation from God, God has come to us, in the person of Jesus, who was God in the flesh. Jesus lived a perfect life and never sinned. Yet, even though He had no sin to die for, He chose to die on a cross for our sin, to pay the penalty we deserve. And then, Jesus rose from the dead in victory over sin so that anyone anywhere, no matter who they are or what they have done, can be forgiven of all their sin and reconciled into relationship with God forever. This is good news!

If you have recently decided to turn from your sin and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, congratulations! You've made the important and significant decision you will ever make. In making this commitment to submit your life to the Lordship of Christ, your next step is to make that profession of faith public, by getting baptized before your church family.

Baptism is one of the major highlights of the Christian life. Baptism serves as:

- A significant milestone on your spiritual journey.
- A sign of your covenant relationship with Jesus Christ.
- A step of obedience as you grow in becoming a disciple of Jesus.
- An opportunity to make disciples as you proclaim to others how Christ has transformed your life.
- A celebration of the new life you've been given in Christ.

If McLean Bible Church is the place you consider to be your church home, then we'd love to walk alongside you in that process. We want to help you understand all that baptism means and rejoice with you about what God is doing in your life. If you are able to be baptized soon, this will be a special moment in your life and your faith family, and we look forward to worshipping and celebrating with you at your upcoming baptism.

## **BAPTISM—WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**

- Baptism is a one-time spiritual event indicating—in an outward, symbolic and public way—your internal response to the gospel message and a decision that already has been expressed by faith in your heart.
- It is symbolic of your identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
- It is saying publicly that you have forsaken your old way of living and that you embrace your new life in Christ.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

- In summary, baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus Christ and is an outward, public sign and declaration of your intention to follow Him.
- Baptism *is not* a spiritual “rededication.”
- Baptism *is not* what some churches call “Confirmation.”

# WHAT DOES THE WORD “BAPTISM” MEAN?

1. **Literally**—the New Testament Greek word *baptizo* means “dip” or “immerse” something into water.
2. **Figuratively**—the primary meaning takes on a secondary meaning, namely “identify with.” Think of a can of paint—whatever color—and a paintbrush. If you dip the brush into the can, the paintbrush will take on the same color as the paint inside the can. Similarly, at conversion when you are placed into the body of Christ and when His Holy Spirit comes to reside in your heart, then you begin to manifest Godly character qualities.

*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... (Galatians 5:22-23a)*

## WHY SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

1. Because you want to follow the example of Jesus Christ

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. (Mark 1:9)*

2. Because you want to obey Jesus’ command to be baptized

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

3. Because privately you want to affirm that Jesus is your Savior and Lord

*And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3)*

4. Because publicly you want to declare your allegiance to Jesus Christ to those inside the church, and to those outside the faith community

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)*

*Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)*

## WHAT DOES BAPTISM SYMBOLIZE?

1. As you are lowered into the water and then raised up out of the water, you are identifying yourself with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Romans 6:3-5)*

2. You are personally declaring the death and burial of your old way of life—before conversion—and allegiance to your new life in Christ.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

# IS BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

- No, you cannot earn your salvation.

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

- Baptism is not a condition for salvation; rather it is a consequence of salvation.
- The act of baptism does not grant you salvation nor does it assist you in holding onto or maintaining your salvation. Salvation is God's realm and responsibility alone. Only God's grace, and your faith in Christ's finished work on the cross and in His resurrection, brings you into the family of God.
- Baptism—much like a wedding ring—is an outward symbol of a commitment you have already made in your heart to the Lord.
- Like Communion (the Lord's Supper) baptism is a symbolic ritual—an act of obedience to Jesus Christ's command.

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

## WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Any person of any age who clearly understands and clearly has responded to the gospel message summarized below:

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

Note in the book of Acts that the issue is understanding and response...

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)*

*But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12)*

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. (Acts 16:31-33)*

*Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)*

At McLean Bible Church, we do not "baptize" or "christen" infants and younger children. However, we do encourage the biblical practice of dedication\* based upon two clear examples we see in Scripture:

1. Hannah Dedicates Samuel:

*And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, "I have asked for him from the Lord." The man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever." (1 Samuel 1:20-22)*

2. Jesus Presented in the Temple:

*And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:21-22)*

\*If you'd like more information regarding child dedications at MBC, please contact the children's department at the MBC location you attend.



# WHEN SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

There is no mandatory timeline, but typically in Scripture a person was baptized soon after their conversion experience. Some were baptized immediately (Philippian jailer); others the same day (Cornelius, Lydia), or a few days later (Apostle Paul).

We strongly encourage followers of Jesus Christ to pursue baptism **as soon as practically possible** after placing their faith in Him—but only with clear understanding and instruction.

*Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:*

*“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter  
and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he opens not his mouth.  
In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth.”*

*And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:26-38)*

# HOW ARE YOU TO BE BAPTIZED?

At McLean Bible Church, individuals are baptized by total physical immersion in water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We do this for two reasons:

1. **The meaning of the word the Bible uses for “baptism.”** With reference to baptism, the Holy Spirit could have selected the common Greek word *epicheo* (“pour upon”) or another common Greek word *hrantizo* (“sprinkle”), but instead, throughout the New Testament the Holy Spirit selected the word *baptizo* which literally means “to immerse.”
2. **The text of Scripture describes immersion.** IN passages describing someone being baptized, the Bible specifically states, “down into” and “up out of” the water.

*And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:38-39)*

*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; (Matthew 3:16)*

3. The act of immersion best symbolizes the gospel message and your faith in Jesus Christ.

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Romans 6:3-5)*

# SHOULD SOMEONE BE BAPTIZED TWICE?

The Bible speaks about being born twice but not about being baptized twice.

*Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)*

- A person’s conversion and his or her baptism are closely linked in Scripture.

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)*

- At conversion, the follower of Jesus Christ is placed—at that moment, once and for all—into the body of Christ.

*or in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)*

- If you were dedicated, christened, or baptized as an infant—or as a teenager or adult—but before you had come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ, that is, understood and responded to the gospel message, then we recommend that you proceed with baptism by immersion regardless of your age.
- This simple act of obedience to Christ in no way devalues an infant christening. Instead, it builds upon the promise your parents and godparents made to nurture you spiritually until you came to your own personal faith, with full understanding of and response to the gospel message. Being baptized again would not reject what your parents originally did, but would rather serve as an affirmation of what they ultimately wanted for your life to know and follow Jesus.

# MAY FAMILY MEMBERS BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?

Yes, we encourage it, provided that each member of the family has made a genuine profession of faith in Jesus Christ and have not already been baptized as a believer.

*And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:15)*

*And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. (Acts 16:31-33)*

*(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) (1 Corinthians 1:16)*

# WILL BAPTISM CANDIDATES NEED TO SAY ANYTHING AT THEIR BAPTISM?

Yes. We encourage those who are baptized to give a short verbal confession of their faith in Jesus Christ.

*So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (Matthew 10:32)*

*because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)*

*Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1 John 4:15)*

*but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (1 Peter 3:15)*

- *In most circumstances*—prior to the day of baptism—we will require a written testimony and will provide a pastor or leader who can help you in your writing.
- *In many circumstances*, if time permits, we will ask baptismal candidates to read their personal testimony in 1-2 minutes in such a way that anyone hearing you could (1) see how Christ has changed your life and (2) understand how to become a follower of Jesus Christ as well.

## **HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR BAPTISM AT MBC?**

Feel free to reach out to a pastor or staff member at the MBC location you attend. OR, you can fill out a baptism application online at [mcleanbible.org/baptism](https://mcleanbible.org/baptism).



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