



OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH

BAPTISM GUIDE

Christians participate in two God-ordained practices that celebrate what God has done for us: *communion* and *baptism*. Communion is celebrated on a regular basis and reminds us of the body and blood of Jesus that was broken for us on the cross. Baptism is a one-time public declaration of a life devoted to God. It symbolizes to ourselves and others the new life we've been given in Jesus.

Baptism is an outward sign of what the Bible calls *repentance*. Repentance is a decision to put away the things in our life that do not honor God and pursue life as God intended.

As you consider baptism, this guide is designed to give a simple, biblical overview of what baptism is and why it matters. Before we understand what baptism is, however, we must understand the gospel.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The gospel tells us that we are more sinful than we ever dared believe but more loved than we ever dared hope. It is the news that Jesus Christ died in our place for our sins (our wrongdoings and evil deeds) and rose again, triumphantly, so that we could live in freedom and in relationship with God, Himself.

The gospel requires that we acknowledge our sin and our inability to save ourselves. It calls us to believe that God came to us in Jesus to pay the price for our sins. And it demands that we surrender ourselves wholly to Him in loving obedience.

When that happens we are forgiven and God's Spirit comes to live in us, to guide and empower our lives. We are given a "new birth" in which our old life is put to death and

our new life begins – one where we walk in relationship with God and others! The Bible calls this the Kingdom of God. It also says that we are adopted into a new, spiritual family. This family is not defined by genetics or ancestry. It is a family united through the saving work of Jesus! It is into this family and into a relationship with God that a person is baptized.

Scripture references: Isaiah 53:4-6; John 3:16-18; Acts 3:19-20; Romans 3:23; 5:6-8; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 1:5, 2:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–10

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

1. It is a public declaration of a person's repentance and trust in Jesus Christ

It is a pronouncement of belief and change of behavior; a visible demonstration that you are turning from your old life and facing the new. Baptism is a visible demonstration of the transformation you've experienced through Jesus.

2. It is a commitment to God

Baptism is like a wedding ring: it's the outward symbol of the commitment you make in your heart. It is a pledge in the sight of God and others that you are putting your complete trust in Jesus Christ. This is not a commitment that should be taken lightly nor is it one that an infant can make. It is a choice by one who knowingly entrusts themselves to the Lord.

3. It is a point of departure from your old lifestyle and the start of life as a new creation

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that through Jesus' work on the cross you are a new creation. Your old way of life was put to death and now God opens up a new way of living - one with meaning, purpose, and the presence of His Spirit. This is why baptism is done through immersion. Just as Jesus' body was placed in a grave and rose again, our old life has been buried in His likeness and spiritually raised to new life. If a person is not willing to surrender their old way of life to the Lord, they are not ready to be baptized.

4. It is the means of bringing us into union with Christ and the Church

1 Corinthians 12:13 says that when we are baptized we are baptized into the body of Christ, which is the church. Baptism brings us into unity with other believers who make up our new family – a spiritual family – who are knit together by God as brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. It is God's claim of ownership over me

Surrendering to God and receiving forgiveness means that we are not only giving our sins to Him, but our very lives. The Bible says, "You are not your own, for you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). That price was the blood of Jesus Christ. By receiving forgiveness and adoption into God's family, we also renounce any ownership over our lives. Instead, we offer ourselves up as a "...living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1).

Only when a person is willing to commit to the above should they be baptized. This does not mean a person needs to be perfect. However, it does mean a commitment to pursue God's will above their own in all areas of their life, however imperfect it may be at times.

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

1. Because you want to follow Jesus Christ's example

"At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."
Mark 1:9

2. Because Jesus Christ commands it

"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all the people everywhere and make them disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" (Matt. 28:19-20)

If it is important enough for Jesus to do, isn't it important enough for us to follow?

3. Because it demonstrates your repentance

“Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39)

4. Because obeying Jesus’ command shows that you know Him

“We know that we have come to know him, if we obey His commands.” 1 John 2:3

5. Because you were never baptized as a believer

“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” (Rom. 10:9-10). Perhaps you were baptized as an infant or before you willingly surrendered your life to Jesus. Now is the time to be baptized as one who believes and confesses that Jesus is Lord!



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– BAPTISM GUIDE (for Kids) –

A Note to Parents:

You know your child better than anyone else. As you walk through this guide together, take time to assess how well your child understands the gospel and whether they have personally and willingly placed their faith in Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind that faith is not about perfect certainty or the ability to articulate every biblical truth. At its core, faith is trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior, and God—and it's a decision each person must make for themselves.

If, after working through this guide, you believe your child has genuinely made this decision, please reach out to your pastor so they can help in the process of discernment and preparation.

We want to be careful not to rush this step. Baptism without true faith and repentance can create a false sense of security. If you're unsure about your child's readiness, it's okay to wait. God's timing is always perfect.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to talk with your pastor or an elder. We are here to walk with you.

Baptism

Baptism is a special way we show the world that we have chosen to follow Jesus! In the Bible, there are two special things we do to remember and celebrate what Jesus did for us: *Communion* and *Baptism*.

Baptism is what we're learning about today. Baptism is like saying out loud to everyone: "I love Jesus and I want to live for Him!"

But why would anyone want to follow Jesus?

You know how sometimes you do things that are wrong—like being mean to your brother or sister, or not obeying your parents? The Bible calls these wrong things "sin." Everyone does wrong things sometimes, even grown-ups!

But here's the amazing news: God loves you SO much that He came to earth as Jesus to take the punishment for all the wrong things we do. Jesus died on a cross, but then He came back to life! God wants to forgive us and have a relationship with us but you have to decide if you want to follow Him. That's a decision we each make for ourselves.

Once a person chooses to give their life to Jesus, we celebrate that decision with a baptism!

But what does baptism mean?

1. Baptism is like making a promise to God

Just like when two people get married and wear special rings to show they promised to love each other, baptism is your way of promising to love and follow Jesus.

2. Baptism shows others that we know Jesus

Baptism lets others know that we have chosen to follow Jesus. It's a party where your whole church and your family get to celebrate with you!

3. Baptism means that you are part of God's family

When we tell God we're sorry for doing wrong things and ask Jesus to be our friend and leader, something wonderful happens—we become part of God's family! It also means that we get to spend forever with Him, even after we die.

What happens when a person gets baptized?

The Bible teaches that when a person is baptized, they go all the way under water (don't worry—it's only for a second!). This is like what happened to Jesus.

Going under the water is like being buried (like when Jesus died). Coming up out of the water is like coming back to life (like when Jesus came back to life). It shows that your new life of following Jesus has started!

Am I ready to be baptized?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I believe that Jesus died for my sins and came back to life?
- Have I asked Jesus to forgive me and be my leader?
- Do I want to obey God and do what's right (even when it's hard)?
- Do I want to tell others that I follow Jesus?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you might be ready for baptism! But remember—you don't have to be perfect. Nobody is perfect except Jesus! You just need to trust Him with all of your heart and live for Him.



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