

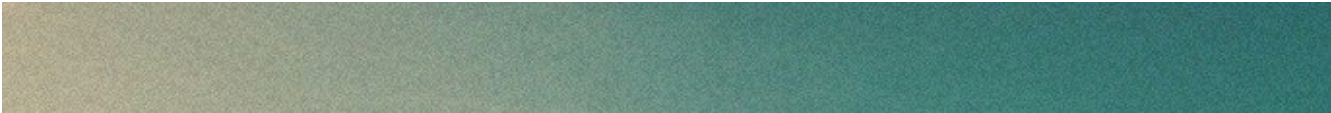
A landscape photograph with a teal and blue color palette. The top half shows a sky with soft, wispy clouds. The bottom half shows rolling hills or dunes. A large, semi-transparent white triangle is overlaid on the center of the image, pointing downwards.

BAPTISM

at first baptist church

A landscape photograph with a teal and blue color palette, similar to the top image. The bottom half shows rolling hills or dunes. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the center of the image, partially overlapping the hills.

at first baptist church



I am so pleased that you are considering Baptism! Your interest in exploring this vitally important part of the Christian faith is a sign that God is at work in your life. This guide has been put together to answer some of the biggest questions people ask about baptism. As you read through this guide, our hope at First Baptist Church is that you would take hold of the great things that God has in store for you.



Rev. Steven Amarin
First Baptist Church Tillsonburg



What is baptism?

Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin

Baptism is rooted in the Old Testament practice of ceremonial washing that took place in a special pool of water or a stream. This ritual would prepare a person to participate with others in worshipping God. It was also practised by those who desired to join with God and His people. Being washed in this way demonstrated the impurity of a person's past being washed away. Similarly, in the New Testament, baptism serves as a symbol of the washing away of our sins that happens when we come to faith in Jesus Christ (see Acts 22:16).

Baptism symbolizes new life in Christ

As we read Romans 6:3-6, baptism is also compared with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Being lowered into the water symbolizes Jesus' death and that our old sinful life is dead and buried. Coming out of the water symbolizes Jesus rising from the grave and that we have a new life through him. In this way, baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and reminds us that we too can live eternally after we die.

It is important to know that since a person is saved when they come to believe in Jesus Christ, Baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, Baptism is an important step of obedience to publicly declare a person's commitment to following Jesus Christ.

Who should be baptized?

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ

The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) give an account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These books are called the *Gospels*, a word that simply means 'good news'. In John 3:16 the good news is summed up for us,

“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.”

The Bible makes it clear that we have all sinned (Romans 3:23) and that by ourselves we can do nothing to erase the effect of sin in our lives. This sin separates us from God and keeps us from knowing Him. No amount of good deeds or positive thoughts can remove this sin from our lives. When we hear the good news that God sent his son Jesus to save us by taking the punishment for our sin, we must make a choice. The choice is to either trust and follow Christ *or* to continue being separated from God in our life of sin. Jesus took our punishment upon the cross so that when we believe in him our sin is completely forgiven and we can have a right relationship with God. To believe in Christ means trusting in him and accepting that he lived, died to take away our sin and was raised from death. When we truly believe in Jesus we are saved from sin and get to enjoy God forever. Salvation is a free gift that God has made available to all who willingly receive it.

If you would like to receive the free gift of salvation you can call out to God praying...

“God, I am sorry for my sin. I believe that you sent your Son Jesus to die for my sin upon the cross and that he was raised so that I may have eternal life. I receive him today as my Lord and Saviour and ask that you would help me live to honour you.”

The Bible shows us that baptism is the next step of obedience for everyone who truly believes in Jesus Christ.

Why should I be baptized?

To follow the example of Jesus Christ

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist as he began his public ministry (Matthew. 3:13-17). Jesus led by his example and has shown us how we are to follow after him.

To obey the command of Jesus Christ

Not only should you follow Christ's example in baptism, but also obey his command to be baptized. Before Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Heavenly Father he commissioned his disciples to go and make more disciples by baptizing and teaching people to obey his commands (Matthew 28:19).

To publicly profess your faith in Jesus Christ

Baptism is an outward act that shows a person's inward change. This is a personal step of obedience that a believer must choose to take. A baptism service is one of the first opportunities for a new believer to share their personal faith in Jesus Christ. The earliest Christians, after gladly receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour, were baptized to show others that they were to be counted among his followers (Acts 2:37-41).

When should I be baptized?

Soon after receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

One of the first acts of obedience after coming to believe in Jesus Christ is to follow his command and be baptized. Baptism is something we should not delay or put off until we feel like we are good enough. Jesus welcomes all people to come to him and let his power do the work of transforming them.

Look up these Bible passages and see how some of the earliest followers of Jesus did not delay being baptized.

- Peter's message on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37)
- Philip's ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:12-16)
- Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-38)
- Saul's conversion (Acts 9:18)
- The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
- The conversion of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33)

Am I too young to be baptized?

Jesus commanded his followers to let the little children come to him and to not hinder them (Mark 10:13-16). At First Baptist Church we rejoice when a young person comes to believe in Jesus Christ and begins to follow him. As we guide young people to come to Jesus, it is our desire that they would follow his command by being baptized. As we do this we also want to be confident that anyone, young or old, who enters the waters of baptism does so with a personal belief in the good news of Jesus Christ and an understanding of what baptism means.

At our church we do not have an official age requirement for baptism but we believe that Christian parents usually know best if their child is ready. For parents who desire some help in discerning if it is the right timing, we have a resource titled the *Children's Baptism Readiness Guide*. This resource helps parents engage in conversation with their child so they can observe and determine their readiness. We want to encourage parents that there is no need to rush until God makes things clear. Our pastors are always willing to speak with you and your child to provide personal guidance.

How should a person be baptized?

Believer's Baptism by immersion

As a Baptist church, we affirm the method of baptism found in the Bible and practiced by the early Church. It is our belief that baptism is meant for believers only, that is, for those who have personally come to believe in Jesus Christ. Baptists, along with several other Christian groups, practice believer's baptism by immersion to stay true to the original practice we find in the Bible. The Greek word *baptizo* that was originally used in the Bible, means to fully immerse something under water. Historians also point out that for the first few centuries of the Christian Church, believers were baptized in this manner.

Infant baptism began being practised several centuries after the Christian Church began. This new practice began because of a misconception among some Christians that baptism was necessary for a person to be saved and gain entrance to heaven. Several other Christian denominations practice infant baptism as a means of bringing a child into covenant with God's people. With infant baptism, parents make vows on behalf of their child with the hope that he or she will eventually profess their personal belief in Jesus at a later time. At First Baptist Church we encourage Christian parents to present their children for the *Ceremony of Dedication* where a prayer of blessing is given over the child and the parents commit themselves to raise their child to know God. Our hope is that this child will eventually come to personal faith in Jesus and choose to profess their faith through believer's baptism. If you have been baptized as an infant we encourage you to be baptized as a believer in order to profess your personal faith in Jesus.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Upon a person's profession of faith in Jesus Christ, believers are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus commanded us to do (Matthew 28:19). This signifies that baptism is done under the full authority of God.

How should I prepare for baptism?

Each year there are several opportunities for baptisms to take place in our church. When someone desires to be baptized, they begin by speaking with one of the pastors. In the weeks leading up to the baptism service there will be a baptism class with a pastor and the group of those being baptized. This class will connect you with spiritual support, helpful teaching and an opportunity to ask questions as you consider your readiness for baptism.

On the day of the baptism service, those being baptized will gather in the waiting room beside the stage with our helpers. You will have brought a towel, plastic bag and swimwear. You will use one of the private washrooms to change into your swimwear and have a special gown to cover you.

As the baptism service begins each person will take a turn to enter the baptistry, that is the pool of water in the church sanctuary. In the baptistry the pastor will say a few words to introduce you to the congregation. You will have the option of sharing a brief testimony of how you came to personally believe in Jesus Christ *or* have someone share words on your behalf. The pastor will then ask you to respond to three questions:

- Have you received Jesus as your personal Lord and saviour?*
- Do you commit to turning away from sin and walking in God's ways?*
- Do you commit to serving him in the fellowship and mission of his church?*

The pastor will then say, "Upon the profession of your faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". You will then be fully lowered into the water and then brought back up quickly. You will then leave the baptistry to change back into your dry clothes and join the congregation.

At the end of the baptism service there will be a special prayer for each person who was baptized to pray for God's blessing and welcome the Holy Spirit's continued work in their lives.


What happens after I am baptized?

Baptism is your opportunity to publicly profess that you believe in Jesus Christ and desire to follow him completely. It is important to understand that baptism is one of the first steps of obedience in the Christian walk, a walk that involves growing daily as a follower of Jesus Christ within the fellowship of the Church.

Following baptism it is essential that you develop a strong bond with your church family. We encourage each person who has been baptized to affirm their commitment to Christ's Church locally by becoming a member of First Baptist Church. Our hope is that you will be involved in the full life of our congregation and faithfully contribute your time, abilities and resources to the work and mission of our church.

As a baptized believer we also encourage you to participate in communion with our church family on the first Sunday of each month. This special ceremony has been given by Jesus as a time for all believers to gather together and remember what he has done for us. The bread represents his body that was given for us and the grape juice represents his blood that was shed on the cross. This is a powerful time to reflect on the love God has shown us through His son and to renew your commitment to following him.

Baptism will be an important step in your life where you will make a public profession of your faith in Jesus Christ. If the Christian life looks too hard, you must remember that it is not by your own human strength that you will grow and become more like Christ, it is by God's strength as he empowers you by the Holy Spirit. There will be times where you will stumble, but we have assurance that God forgives us as we confess our sin to him (1 John 1:9). With God's power and the ongoing encouragement of our church family, it is our hope that you will grow to become all that He has made you to be and bring to completion the work He has started in you.



For more information on baptism or to speak to a pastor about being baptized, please contact us at First Baptist Church Tillsonburg.

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