

Baptism

Depending on whom you ask you will hear dozens of different traditions, teachings and opinions about the subject of baptism. Even though there are multiple opinions, there is only one truth that really matters, the truth revealed in the Bible. We at FCC of Greenwood strive to model ourselves in accordance with the Scriptures. According to our understanding of the Bible, here are our answers to several important questions regarding baptism.



Who should be baptized?

All believers are candidates for baptism. Christ said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" ([Mark 16:16](#)). Anyone who is willing to repent of their sins, and confess their belief in Jesus, should be baptized. ([Matthew 28:19](#), [Acts 2:38-39](#))

How should we be baptized?

To understand how we should be baptized is best determined by looking 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."

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](#)). Therefore at FCC of Greenwood we baptize people by immersing them in water.

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](#)), but in the New Testament church, a person's baptism was always the first expression of faith, not separate from it. So baptism was not just a symbol or 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](#)). Because we are trying to restore the original intent and practice of baptism, we ask a person to be baptized at the point that he or she is ready to make a commitment to Christ.

To put it another way, the Bible clearly teaches that a person should be baptized when he or she is capable of:

1) believing in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, and 2) when the individual is capable of repenting of sin. In [Mark 16:16](#), Jesus said that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Jesus clearly indicates that a candidate for baptism must first have the capability of believing in Him. Moreover, in [Acts 2:38](#), Peter preached that an individual must repent and be baptized. He clearly indicates that a candidate for baptism must first have the capability of 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" (repent) about sinful behavior.

These verses help us understand that little children are not likely candidates to be baptized. Young children may not have the intellectual development that enables them to believe that Jesus alone saves them from sin, and to conscientiously turn away from sinful behavior. But in the natural course of time a day will come when they can understand and decide to follow the Lord in this way.

Why should we be baptized?

As commanded by Christ, every believer should be baptized. It is essential to becoming a fully devoted 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), and testifying to God's work in our lives (Romans 6:1-8, Galatians 3:27).

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. "...baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through 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.

The act of baptism alone cannot save an individual. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved only through accepting Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Baptism is the point in time when we receive the benefits of our faith, the blessings of salvation, and the forgiveness of our sins. Anyone sprinkled as an infant should be grateful that their parents cared about their spiritual condition, but there comes a time to personally claim the faith yourself, and immersion is the appointed means.

Those who were never baptized by immersion rest in God's merciful hands. In those cases we can only leave the matter up to a loving heavenly Father to do what is right. We hope that Jesus will say to any person who has truly submitted to Him but was not taught about immersion, "Your faith has saved you." Yet someone who understands Christ's command to be immersed and refuses to obey should not consider himself to have submitted to Christ.

Should a person ever be re-baptized?

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

Must a person be baptized during a worship service?

No. In fact, the biblical model was "immediately" (Acts 8:38; 16:33), yet baptisms during worship services are encouraged because they provide the opportunity to testify to your faith and show humility.