



**RIVERSTONE
COMMUNITY
CHURCH**



BAPTISM

When **Jesus commanded** his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations”(Matt 28:18-20), he included two elements:

- (1) **BAPTISING** those disciples and
- (2) **TEACHING** them to obey all he commanded.

Both elements are part of “making disciples.”

At **Riverstone Community Church**,

We commit ourselves to these as we

MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING BAPTISED?

If you're reading this, there's a good chance you're interested in getting baptised. Or, at the very least, you're curious about baptism. If so, you're on the right track. In this small booklet, we hope to answer questions like: **What is baptism? Why be baptised? Who should be baptised? When should I be baptised? How should I be baptised? Where should I be baptised? Who can perform baptism?**

So read on! We're so excited that you are considering baptism because it is a very important step for every follower of Jesus.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

If the meaning of baptism could be boiled down to one word, that word would probably be *identification*. Baptism is a personal, public identification with Jesus Christ. When a person is baptised they are publicly confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and personally identifying with Him in His death, burial and resurrection.

Through baptism a person is saying,
*"I died with Jesus Christ,
 I was buried with him,
 I am raised with Christ to brand-new life."*

WHY BE BAPTISED?

Here are 5 reasons why a Christian should be baptised:

1. Baptism is **COMMANDED** by Jesus Christ.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 28:18-20)

Therefore, a Christian who knows baptism to be the Lord's command, is not following Jesus' command until he or she is baptised.

Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

Baptism is best viewed as one of the simplest ways a believer can publicly express their love for Jesus Christ.

2. **Baptism is COMMENDED by our Lord's example.**

"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; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

The Apostle Peter reminds us that Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Following Jesus' steps will lead every follower to the waters of baptism. It must surely bring Jesus, and His Father, great pleasure whenever they see a Christian following Christ's example by being baptised!

3. **Baptism was the COMMON practice of Christians in the early New Testament Church.**

In the New Testament baptism followed immediately after a person placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Please read the following and look up verses for yourself:

On the day of Pentecost, the new believers who had just trusted in Jesus, were immediately baptised. *"So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls."* (Acts 2:41)

Immediately after he had trusted in Jesus the man from Ethiopia said, *"See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"* (Acts 8:35-38). After which he went into the water and was baptised.

Saul of Tarsus, converted only 3 days, was baptised (Acts 9:18). Later he became the Apostle Paul and in Romans 6:1-4 and Colossians 2:12 he taught the same truth to his converts.

In **Acts 10:43-48** all those who had believed the message preached by the Apostle Peter regarding the forgiveness of sins, and who received the Holy Spirit, were baptised. (Note: The Holy Spirit is received into your life when you believe the Gospel. See Ephesians 1:13).

In **Acts 16:14-15** we read about Lydia, a brand new believer, who was baptised immediately after the Lord opened her heart to understand and believe the gospel.

Acts 16:30-34 tells about a jailor who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with all his household, and was baptised at the same hour of the night.

Acts 18:8 records, *"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."*

Does Baptism Save?

No, baptism does not save us, nor is it necessary for salvation. If it were, then salvation would no longer be by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10). However, that does not diminish the value of baptism for the believer as a first step of obedience to Jesus and a way of publicly identifying with Him.

After reading these examples you might ask yourself, "Why were all of these Christians baptised after they were converted?" The answer must surely be because they knew that Christ commanded them to be baptised and because they wanted to express their love to their new found Saviour by publicly identifying with Him through baptism.

4. Baptism is a public CONFESSION of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a personal IDENTIFICATION with Him in His death, burial and resurrection.

Theologically, baptism may be defined as an act of association or identification with someone, some group, some message, or some event. In particular, **Christian baptism means identification with the message of the Gospel and the person of Jesus Christ. It is the visible, outward expression of an inward decision for Christ.**

5. Baptism is a CHALLENGE to live a Godly life.

In Romans 6:4 Paul says, *"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 all these reasons baptism is a joyous and memorable event. It is important, however, that you get baptised for the right reasons. Baptism should not be entered into because you would like to make your family happy, you want God to love you more, you are afraid that you are not saved, or reasons similar to these. Rather, **you should desire to be baptised because you want to obey your Saviour and identify your life with His.**

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

At Riverstone Community Church we practice what is called "believer's baptism", which means we only baptise those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In the book of Acts, we find baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word and believing in Christ. There is no evidence in the new Testament that nonbelievers were baptised. Therefore, we would say that any baptism that happens before a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, is not the type of baptism seen in the Scriptures.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

You should be baptised after clearly understanding the gospel and placing your faith in Jesus Christ. These two elements are essential. Firstly, the gospel message must be clearly understood. Sometimes that happens immediately, and other times it is a process (taking days, months, or years). Secondly, after the gospel message has been understood, there must be a decision to place one's faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It is only after a person has understood the gospel and trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour that they should be baptised.

In saying that, after trusting in Jesus please do not wait too long to be baptised!

In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism occurs fairly quickly after a person places their face in Jesus Christ. This pattern should be emulated unless there are convincing reasons to delay baptism.

Testimony Interview

At Riverstone Community Church we like a person who desires to be baptised to meet with one of the ministry leaders so that they can share their testimony. Sometimes these testimonies are then shared at the baptism service.

In addition to this we want to make sure that you know that **you don't have to be perfect to get baptised**. Water baptism is not a claim to perfection, nor will it make you perfect. Rather, it is a claim that you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, that you want to obey Him, and that you want to be publicly identified with Him.

Remember, once you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, baptism is the next step in your spiritual journey.

A note to those regarding infant baptism:

Some faith traditions, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, practice infant baptism. They differ in this way: while Roman Catholic infant baptism sees baptism as the remission (removal) of sin and granting of saving grace to the child, Protestant infant baptism sees it as identifying the child with the New Covenant (in the same way circumcision was a sign of the Old Covenant) and then, upon a true profession of faith later in life, the person baptised as an infant is saved. **However, we believe that baptism follows saving faith, and that saving faith requires comprehension of the gospel message before it can be properly received—so baptism cannot happen before faith.** Thus, we would gladly accept anyone seeking baptism who may have been baptised as an infant.

A note to those with young children seeking baptism:

While, at times, it is difficult to discern at such a young age whether or not that child has comprehended the gospel, we certainly believe that salvation can come at a young age. To help in that process we would like to discuss this matter with you in person. We'd also ask that your child prepare a brief testimony. Please know that, because baptism is not saving, delaying baptism in order to discern comprehension of the gospel is okay.

A note to those who have delayed their baptism:

Fear, insecurity, lack of instruction, and many other reasons cause a number of people to delay baptism long beyond they have comprehended the gospel and trusted in Jesus. After that, possibly guilt or shame for delaying may set in. We want to say this: *all obedience is beautiful*. If you have delayed your baptism for any reason, please do not allow that reason to hold you back anymore. If this describes your current situation we would love to meet with you and discuss things further.

HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

Riverstone Community Church practices baptism by immersion rather than by pouring or sprinkling. We do so in light of the following considerations:

1. The Greek word for 'baptise' literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.

Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek *baptizo*. *Baptizo* was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian baptism.

2. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion. (cf. Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-4)

The symbolism of burial is still that of being placed under something. Likewise, resurrection means coming out of something (whether a grave or tomb). Immersion best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing them out.

3. The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion (cf. Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:5,10; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39).

Whenever the act of baptism is described in the New Testament, the one who is baptised actually goes into the water. Thus, after Jesus was baptised, He *"came up out of the water"* (Mark 1:10), and when Philip baptised the Ethiopian eunuch, *"they both went down into the water"* (Acts 8:38).

In light of the above reasons Riverstone Community Church normally practices baptism by immersion. We believe that immersion is the best way to symbolise the conversion that has happened and reflects what we see in Scripture. However, we do not hold this as law. If there are needs present preventing baptism by immersion, we will work to accommodate them.

WHERE SHOULD I BE BAPTISED?

Although there are no prescriptions in the Scriptures to location, at Riverstone Community Church we prefer to baptise within the context of the local church in order to allow the congregation to celebrate together in a person's act of obedience.

That said, we do not want to prescribe what the Scriptures do not, and thus we do allow for baptism to occur outside the gathering of the local church. Our preference in such cases is that video and/or pictures be taken to record the event so that the church can share in the joy.

WHO CAN PERFORM BAPTISM?

The Bible gives no prescription for the requirements to perform baptism. Contrary to some traditions, there seems to be no biblical reason to restrict the duty to men who are in leadership roles. **Therefore, we allow any believer, male or female, who has faithfully obeyed Christ's command to be baptised to perform the ordinance of baptism for another believer.**

ARE YOU READY TO BE BAPTISED?

If you now desire to be baptised we ask that you contact one of the church leaders who will arrange a time to meet with you to hear your personal testimony. Upon confirmation that you are a genuine believer, they will work with you to make arrangements to be baptised.

FAQs

1. What is baptism?

Baptism literally means to be immersed in water. It is a physical act of conscious obedience by which a person identifies himself or herself with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, a symbol of the death of his or her old self and resurrection to a new life in Christ, publicly declaring his or her faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

2. Who should get baptised?

Every follower of Christ.

3. What if I was baptised as an infant or child?

Unless you consciously submitted yourself to God and were aware of the significance of baptism and the statement that you were making by being baptised at the time you were baptised, you should seriously consider believer's baptism. Infant and child baptism usually has more to do with the faith of the parents than that of the child.

4. Am I still a Christian if I don't get baptised?

Yes. We are saved through faith in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ, not through baptism. Still, if we truly believe, we will follow Christ's example and biblical command by getting baptised. It is an act of obedience and a declaration of trust that flows out of God's work of salvation in our hearts.

5. How is a baptism usually performed?

Usually the person being baptised (i.e. baptisee), and the person who is baptising them (i.e. baptiser), enter the water. After which the person being baptised is asked, "Do you confess and believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour?", to which the baptisee will respond, "Yes" or "I do." The baptiser will then say, "based upon your confession of faith in Jesus Christ I now baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." The baptiser will then immerse and subsequently raise the person being baptised out of the water.

6. Who usually attends the Baptism?

It is up to the person being baptised who they want to invite. Often family, friends and the local church are invited to the baptism. Baptismal services are a great opportunity to declare to everyone present the good news about salvation through Jesus Christ.

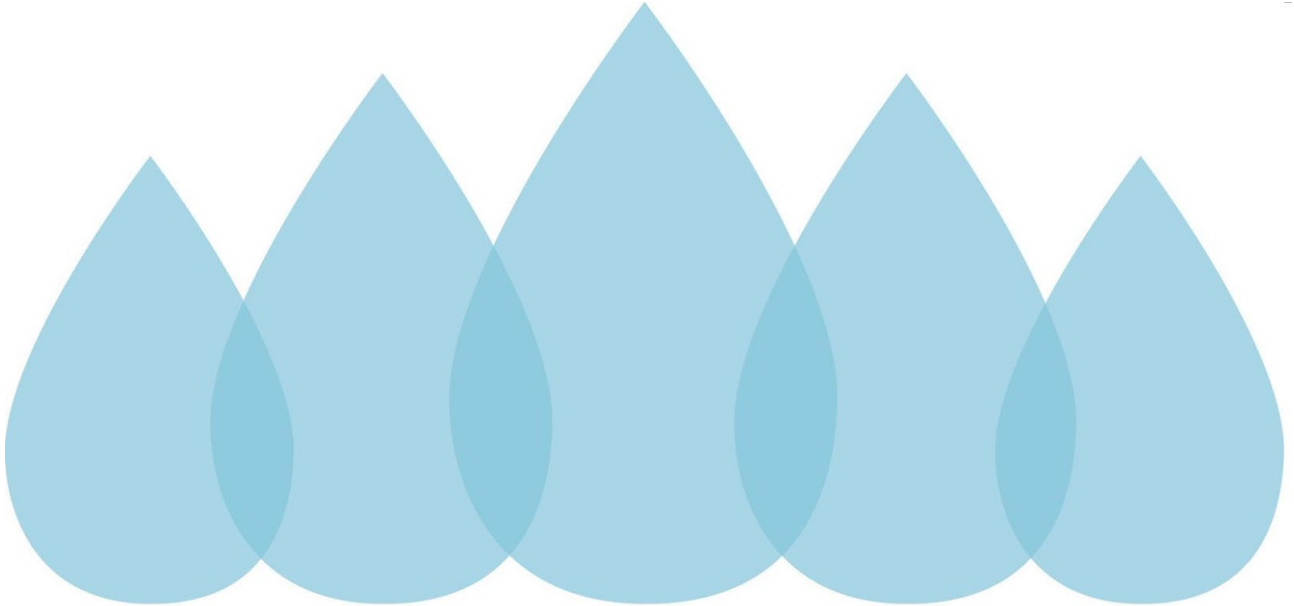
7. What should I wear when I get baptised?

We recommend that everyone who gets baptised wears full underwear with dark colour shorts / pants and a shirt over the top. Remember to bring toiletries (i.e. comb or brush), a towel, and a complete change of clothing as well.

8. Is there anything else I need to know?

On a practical note and to make things easier; it is recommended to use one hand to hold the nose closed and to hold that elbow with the free hand. For example; right hand on nose and left hand on right elbow.

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