

BAPTISM

A STEP OF DISCIPLESHIP

THE GREAT COMMISSION

After Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead, he commissioned his followers to carry on his mission in the world. This is our mission as Christians.

Matthew 28:16–20 (ESV)

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

In these verses, Jesus gave one command: “Make disciples.” The rest of his words explain how disciples are made: Going, Baptizing, and Teaching.

- **Going:** proclaiming the gospel and bringing someone to faith in Christ
- **Baptizing:** publicly identifying that person with Christ and his people
- **Teaching:** instructing him or her in the commands of Christ

In light of this “Great Commission,” it is obvious that baptism is an integral and foundational part of what it means to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Since baptism is so important, we need to answer five questions concerning what Christian baptism is all about. This publication is intended to answer these questions and to be used in the context of a baptism class and interview, to help prepare believers for this next step in their walk with Christ.



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WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Baptism is an illustration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 (ESV) “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”
- Romans 6:3–4 (ESV) 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.
- Colossians 2:12 (ESV) having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

Baptism is a public identification of a disciple.

- Acts 2:41 (ESV) So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Baptism is a solemn declaration (pledge) of a person's intention to live a life of obedience to God.

Romans 6:4 (ESV) 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.

Symbol of Salvation:

Baptism is a symbol of salvation. Being baptized does not save a person from the penalty of sin. Only Christ saves us, when we put our trust in Him alone and in His finished work on the cross. Baptism is like a wedding ring — it is a fitting outward symbol of a person's new relationship to God and of his or her responsibility to live a new lifestyle. Baptism is an OUTWARD sign of an INWARD change. If you have not yet repented of your sinful life and placed your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, you are not ready for baptism. Please talk with one of our pastors or elders about the Gospel and how to be born again.



WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

To follow the example of Jesus

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

• Because Christ commanded it

- Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV) And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

• To demonstrate you are a disciple of Jesus

- 1 John 2:4 (ESV) Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

Because Jesus was baptized that way.

- Matthew 3:16 ^(ESV) And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water...

Because every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion.

- John 3:23 ^(ESV) John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized
- Acts 8:38–39 ^(ESV) And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ 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.

The Greek word “baptize” (baptizo) means to “dip or immerse.”

(Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker: A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, p. 131)

Forward, backward, once, thrice?

The bible does not specify which direction to baptize, or how many times to baptize. Different Christian traditions have grown up through this void. At VCC, we baptize once in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We baptize backward so that as the person comes out of the water forward, it is a symbol of moving from death forward into new life in Christ.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Every person who has trusted in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior and desires to follow him in discipleship.

- John 1:12–13 ^(ESV) But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Acts 8:12–13 ^(ESV) 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. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip...

• What about infants?

At Versailles Christian Church, we do not baptize infant children for the following reasons.

- Baptism in the New Testament is a "baptism of confession." The purpose was for a person to publicly confess a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Every example of Christian baptism in the New Testament is of people who had come to faith in Christ and were publicly confessing their commitment to Christ.
- Baptism is a picture of salvation by faith. An infant is unable to exercise saving faith in Christ.
- The practice of infant baptism began about 200 years after Christ. It was not the practice of the church described in the New Testament.

Baptism Class

At VCC, we require everyone who desires to be baptized to attend our one-session baptism class in order to prepare you for baptism and to help you build a personal relationship with Jesus. This class will be offered several times each year.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as you have trusted in Christ...

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

...and desire to follow Christ in obedient discipleship.

- Matthew 28:19 ^(ESV) 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...

Please Note:

Baptism is like a door that swings a person from salvation to discipleship. In other words, it moves people from knowing that they are forgiven to obediently following the Lord in the fellowship of a Christian church. These two things — salvation and discipleship — can commence at the same time for a person, but in many people's experience a period of time elapses after they come to faith before they understand what it means to follow Christ in obedience.



THE COMMITMENT OF BAPTISM

The person being baptized is making a public and personal commitment to a life of discipleship. This baptismal vow is a solemn statement of the believer's intention to live a life of discipleship in the context of the Christian church. This pledge has several implications for the lifestyle of the baptized person:

A lifestyle characterized by others-centered love ^(John 15:17; Romans 12:10; 1 John 3:23)

- 1 John 3:16 ^(ESV) By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

A commitment to identify with the people of God ^(Ephesians 4:1-3, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 3:8)

- Romans 15:5-6 ^(ESV) May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A commitment to mutual admonition ^(Matt 18:15-19, Col 3:16, 2 Thess 3:15, James 5:19-20, Gal 6:1)

- Matthew 18:15 ^(ESV) "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

A life of moral purity ^{((Romans 6:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)}

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 ^(ESV) For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality...

A life of careful honesty ^(Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9)

- Ephesians 4:25 ^(ESV) Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

A life free of greed and characterized by sacrificial giving ^(Luke 12:15; 2 Cor 8:1-7; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5)

- 2 Corinthians 8:3 ^(ESV) For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord...



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are there any other requirements for baptism?

Spiritually speaking, no. Faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior, and a desire to follow Him as Lord are the only prerequisites for water baptism. Practically speaking, VCC has a process for you to walk through. See below.

Will I be required to say anything?

Yes. It is appropriate at baptism for a person to bear witness to his or her personal faith in Christ and intention to submit to his lordship. This is a great opportunity to encourage others toward faith in Christ.

What should I wear when I am baptized?

Simply wear clothes that you feel comfortable in and don't mind getting wet. Please make sure they are modest and non-distracting. After the baptism, you will be able to change back into dry clothes. Bring a towel and a plastic bag for wet clothes.

THE PROCESS

1.) Attend a baptism class

This single-session class will be offered several times each year.

2.) Talk with an elder or Pastor Nick to set up an interview.

He will meet with you to answer your questions, hear your spiritual story, and insure that you understand the Gospel and baptism.

3.) Write your public testimony.

You will read this at your baptism as a way of telling your story and bringing glory to God. The elder will explain this during

your interview and follow up with you about it afterward.

4.) Schedule or register for your baptism.

Once an elder has approved you for baptism, it's time to get your calendar out. Because we don't have a baptistry at the VCC church building, we will hold special baptism services at other locations throughout the year. Speak with an elder, pastor, or the church secretary to get details and to register.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

- Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

Still have questions? Please contact an elder or pastor, and he will be thrilled to answer any questions you have.