

BAPTISM



**CONNECTION
CHURCH SAVANNAH**

This booklet is for any person wishing to know more about Connection Church's theological convictions regarding baptism. If you have surrendered your life to Christ and wish to be baptized at Connection Church or simply desire to learn more about our beliefs, you can find out more information at connection-savannah.com/baptism.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism and Communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of an invisible grace. They are discernible and tangible representations of both the invisible realities of the Gospel and the Spirit's application of this Gospel to our lives. With both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In baptism, as we enter into the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and through faith in Him, we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ. Connection Church's Statement of Faith describes baptism as a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. As an outward symbol, baptism signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of Satan, sin and death.

As a symbol, baptism illustrates a number of significant realities:

- Christ's death and resurrection.
- The disciple's union with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- The cleansing and washing away of sin.
- The new life in which a disciple walks.

WHAT IS BAPTISM NOT?

Baptism is not "necessary for salvation."

Though grace is mysteriously mediated through baptism, it is not saving grace, but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized. While we believe that baptism is the duty and delight of a Christ follower, we warn against any thinking that suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. Salvation is only found by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.



WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

MATTHEW 28:18–20 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.”

ACTS 2:37–41 37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACTS 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Based on Scripture, we are baptized to:

- 1. Obey the commands of Christ.**
- 2. Demonstrate that we are disciples of Christ.**
- 3. Follow the example of Christ.**

Baptism is not merely a responsibility, but also a privilege. We have the opportunity to demonstrate our trust in and love for our King through obedience in this ordinance. If we think of baptism as a burden, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in the call to be baptized. We should have a similar response as the Ethiopian eunuch who, when he believed the gospel, proclaimed, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:26-40).

It should be our joy and we should eagerly anticipate our participation in the ordinance.

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to glorify God in faithful obedience. Any other motivation (to join a particular local church, to please a friend or family member, etc.) should not be the ultimate reason for seeking to be baptized.



WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

ACTS 22:16

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Biblically, as soon as a person trusts in Christ, he or she should be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a believer refrains from getting baptized. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is rather immediate. We follow this pattern of somewhat immediate baptism unless there are convincing reasons to delay.

The Practice of Connection Church Savannah

At Connection, we ask believers who wish to be baptized to go through this booklet with their Connect Group Leader, Elder or Staff Member to ensure they understand the importance and weight of their Baptism. After doing this, we ask them to sign up for our next scheduled Baptism Celebration. We do this for several reasons. First, this practice allows us to discuss the Gospel and the meaning of baptism and to teach our theological convictions regarding both. Second, it allows the church the opportunity to celebrate together as a congregation, sharing in the joy of a person's obedience and agreeing to walk with him or her in the fellowship of believers. Finally, it allows the person being baptized to invite family and friends who will have an opportunity to celebrate and hear the proclamation of the Gospel.

Improper Motivations for Delaying Baptism

1. NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH

There will never be a time where a person will be "good enough" for baptism. Our right to enter the baptismal waters is grounded upon Christ's righteousness, not our own. If we have been united to Him, we should confidently draw near in obedience to His command and example.

2. FEAR

The enemy often uses fear and anxiety in our life to delay obedience to the Lord and stop us from entering into a wonderful next step of faith. God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). If you are fearful of getting baptized, we encourage you to talk with your Pastor, Connect Group Leader or a Staff Member.

3. WANTING A SPECIFIC TIME, PERSON AND PLACE

Sometimes people want to delay baptism so they can be baptized during a "special" time of the year or at a "special" place or wait until a specific person can witness their baptism. We encourage you not to pass up an opportunity to be baptized, but to trust that God has called you to be obedient in the here and now.

WHERE SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Although there are no specification in Scripture to location, we prefer to practice the ordinance within the context of the Local Church in order to allow the congregation to celebrate together in a person's act of obedience and submission (by context, we do not simply mean in a church building, but through the ministry of a Local Church).

That said, we do not want to suggest what the Scriptures do not and thus we do allow for baptism to occur outside the weekly gathering. 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!

HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling, Connection Church practices baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following considerations.

1. THE GREEK WORD βαπτίζω (BAPTIZO) 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 ordinance of baptism.

2. THE REPRESENTATION OF UNION IN CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION IS BEST EXPRESSED THROUGH IMMERSION

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

COLOSSIANS 2:12 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.

ROMANS 6:3–4 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 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.

3. THE SURROUNDING CONTEXT OF BAPTISMS IN THE SCRIPTURES SUGGESTS BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

MATTHEW 3:16 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...

MARK 1:5, 10 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins...10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

ACTS 8:38-39 38 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.



JESUS IS OUR MODEL.

Use this section to go deeper in personal study of baptism.

Simply put, baptism is the public declaration of your faith and new life in Christ; identifying with His death, burial, and resurrection to new life.

1. WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

Read Matthew 3:1-17, Mark 1:9, and Luke 3:21.

2. HOW DOES BAPTISM HELP ME IDENTIFY WITH CHRIST?

Read: Romans 6:1-14

3. IS BAPTISM SOMETHING JESUS INSTRUCTED ME TO DO?

Read: Matthew 28:19, and Acts 2:41.

SHOULD I BE REBAPTIZED?

For those who were sprinkled or immersed at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you put your faith in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not, indeed should not, be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or immersion in water before being born again and trusting Christ, your experience was not baptism, and thus you need to be baptized. The question is, "Was I truly trusting in Christ when I was baptized?"

There should always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the life of those who have trusted in the Gospel. Believers must not be rebaptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

BAPTISM AT CONNECTION CHURCH

Prior to Baptism

1. As mentioned, we ask those wishing to be baptized to meet with their Connect Group Leader, an Elder or Staff Member in which we ensure there is a clear understanding of the Gospel, core Christian beliefs and our theology of baptism.
2. After this meeting, we ask participants to share their testimony with us, to share the transformation of their life by the Gospel. This will not, nor should it be perfect. Participants will have an opportunity to write their testimony using the testimony tool on page 17.

Baptism Services

1. We have regularly scheduled baptism opportunities in which the church celebrates baptisms together. We encourage those wishing to be baptized to do so within the context of these gatherings.
2. The person performing the baptism will ask 3 questions: "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?", "Do you believe He lived a perfect life, died on a cross and rose again to defeat sin and death?", & "Who is Jesus Christ?"
To which the baptizee will respond, " yes, yes and my Lord & Savior."
3. The baptizer will then say, "I baptize you, my (brother or sister) in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." [Some will choose to also say, "Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life," which is taken from Rom. 6:4

Helpful Hints

1. Please check your email and text messages the week prior to your baptism to know where to go and for more details about your baptism event.
2. Wear dark shorts or pants to maintain modesty. A Baptism t-shirt will be provided for you.
3. Bring a change of clothes, towel and bag to hold your wet clothes after you change.
4. Seats will be reserved for everyone being baptized. There will be a section of seats reserved for families, as well.
5. Arrive 30 minutes prior to service.



SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

What is a Testimony?

Your testimony is your part of God's bigger story. It reflects the change Christ has done and continues to do in you, as further evidence of His Holy Spirit's power. He has rescued you, is transforming you and will sustain you. Just as He did in the Bible, God will use your story as evidence for more people to understand, believe and receive Him for who He is and what He's done.

Simply put, your testimony is the story of what your life was like before you met Jesus, how you came to surrender to Him as your Lord and Savior and what your life is like now that you are in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Why should I share my Testimony?

In Matthew 28, Jesus tells His disciples to "Go and make disciples..." Shortly after, Acts 4:33 tells us that with "great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The apostles set the example before us that we are to go and tell of the resurrection of Jesus. God has equipped each believer with two tools to tell the story: one tool is His Word and the second is our word.

HIS WORD

His Word (the Bible) is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible tells us everything we need to know to surrender our lives to Jesus. The Bible is without error and, in its entirety, reveals the redemptive work of Jesus. It needs nothing else.

OUR WORD

So why were we given two tools? It's true His Word is all sufficient. But, to a world that doesn't know His voice, God has equipped each believer with our word. Our word does not save, but often times becomes the bridge God chooses to use to connect the dying world to the life-giving Savior. Our word shows the validity of His Word to our family, friends and those we come in contact with. We share our testimony out of obedience to Jesus so that those around us can know Him as their Savior. Our word engages hearts. His Word changes hearts.

It is the responsibility of the Church to make disciples. Therefore, Connection Church requests that all those baptized be willing to share their testimony. We do this in two ways; we write our testimony and sometimes we share it via video. Though it may seem intimidating to some and trivial to others, your testimony is a powerful way to share what God has done in your life to people needing your word to connect them to Jesus and His Word.

How do I share my Testimony?

Simply put, you tell your story and talk about your relationship with Jesus. It's your story, but if you need a little help with your word, then turn to His Word. In Acts chapter 26, Paul gives his testimony to King Agrippa. It may be a great idea to pause right now and read this chapter before moving forward.

Paul tells his story with a specific goal: to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. In sharing his testimony, Paul provides us with an outline that is definitely worth repeating.

- 1. Your life before Jesus.**
- 2. How you surrendered to Jesus.**
- 3. Your life in relationship with Jesus.**

Where do I start?

It is helpful to start by writing out your testimony. Ask God to reveal to you the things from your past and present that He wants you to share. Use the template provided to write out your testimony.

TESTIMONY WRITING TOOL

Your Life Before Christ

- **“Before I surrendered my life to Christ...”**
 - Think about your attitudes, beliefs, values and actions before you became a Christian.
 - Who/what did you worship?
 - Be honest, but don't glorify your past/sin. Remember, He gets the glory for the transformation He's done in your life.

Circumstances Surrounding Your Surrender

- **“Then I surrendered my life to Christ...”**
 - Share how you became aware of your need for Christ.
 - How did you receive the gospel?
 - Share how you went from knowing about Him to knowing Him personally.

How Your Life Is Different Since Your Surrender

- **“Now that I have a relationship with Jesus ...”**
 - Explain what a relationship with Him means to you now.
 - Compare your beliefs, attitudes, thoughts and actions now to those you had before surrendering to Christ (consider your relationships, work, values, etc.).
 - Be honest and open - your unique testimony can encourage others in their discipleship journey.

Helpful Testimony Tips

- 1.** Keep your testimony focused on Jesus and what He has done for you.
- 2.** Be authentic. There is no expectation that you ‘have your life all together’ now that you’re following Jesus.
- 3.** Please avoid saying that you have “always been a Christian.” This gives the impression that faith is something you can inherit. Becoming a Christian is about making the decision to accept Christ’s death on the cross as payment for your sin, not just growing up in a Christian home.
- 4.** Please don’t talk about the sins of someone else.

WHAT FOLLOWS BAPTISM?

MATTHEW 28:18-20 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."



Throughout Scripture, individuals are called to “repent and be baptized.” Baptism is the first step of obedience for the believer, but not the last. So what is the believer to do following baptism? Be a disciple. The command of Jesus was not to go and make converts, but to make disciples. As a disciple of Jesus, you are to ultimately be a follower of Jesus in such a way that you become like Him.

How do I grow as a Disciple?

1. READ THE WORD AND PRAY DAILY

The Bible is not just a book of stories, but is one true message revealing the character of God so that we can know Him personally. Daily reading of God’s Word is the best way to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. Visit connection-savannah.com/resources to download our various reading plans to help you read the Word daily.

While the Bible is a primary way God communicates with us, prayer is a way we can communicate with Him. Prayer is one of the strongest ways to deepen your relationship with Jesus. We pray because it transforms our heart to be more like His. We pray to hear from Him. We pray because Jesus prayed.

2. BE ACTIVE IN THE CHURCH BODY BY ATTENDING WORSHIP GATHERINGS REGULARLY.

We gather together each week to worship and glorify God through public declaration of the Gospel, song, teaching and other elements like communion and baptism.

Hebrews 10:24-25 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

3. GET CONNECTED


You were created to be in community and called to be a disciple-making disciple. At Connection, we believe that Community is where real life change happens. The context we do community in at Connection Church is through Connect Groups. There are also other ways to deepen your relationship with Jesus and get connected with other believers including serving, going on a mission trip or joining a disciple group. Check out our Next Steps area on a Sunday to find out more ways to get connected.

4. CONTINUE TO SHARE YOUR STORY

Baptism is the first step of publicly proclaiming Jesus as your Lord and Savior. As a believer, you are called to make known the name of Jesus and His gift of Salvation through the Gospel. Share your story consistently with others who need to hear the good news of Jesus.

5. GET INVOLVED IN A DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIP

If you are a new believer, we have people ready to walk alongside you as you learn more about what following Jesus means. Being discipled will help you learn how to read the Bible, pray and be a part of the body of Christ. If you would like to connect with someone for discipleship, speak with your Connect Group Leader or stop by Next Steps on a Sunday to get connected.







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