

Baptism

at Fellowship of Faith

We're excited you're thinking about baptism! Below are guidelines to help you take this step.

How does the Bible describe baptism?

Life... new birth... being washed clean... dying to that which destroys us.... It's just some of the ways the Bible describes baptism, an amazingly central part of beginning a relationship with Christ.

What is baptism?

In New Testament (NT) times, "baptize" didn't have to have a special religious meaning. It was a common everyday word that meant "to immerse."

When you get baptized, God immerses you with his Holy Spirit while you simultaneously make a powerful statement and commitment to immerse your life in Him. Being baptized, then, means being immersed into Christ.

What are the Biblical foundations for baptism?

The Bible says some amazing things about our baptism into Christ:

1) **Baptism is connected with salvation.**

The NT makes a powerful connection between salvation and our immersion into Christ. Being immersed into Christ means that his death and resurrection apply to us. Any judgment we deserve God puts upon Jesus. Any good favor Jesus deserves God counts towards us. Through Jesus' death and resurrection he defeated sin, death, and the devil. Our immersion into Jesus means we do too! Read Romans 6 and 1 Peter 3:21.

2) **Baptism is connected with faith.**

Baptism is a sign and expression of our new life in Jesus, trust in him, and our desire to turn our lives over to him. Read Acts 16:30-33; 2:37-39; 8:12; and 8:35-38. Notice how all these passages link faith in Jesus with getting baptized.

3) **Baptism is connected with the body of Christ.**

Baptism makes us part of a faith family, called the Church, extending over all space and time. Baptism connects us with Christ, but also with each other! Read Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, and Ephesians 4:4-5.

4) **Baptism is not a magical way to get into heaven.**

Paul warns early Christians about this dangerous line of thinking in 1 Corinthians 10. Baptism by itself will not save you. We are saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is received through faith. While baptism can be a way the Holy Spirit comes to plant or grow faith, that faith can be rejected or allowed to die. Baptism without faith is meaningless.

Who can be baptized?

Anyone who trusts in Jesus as their Savior and wants their life immersed in him.

It doesn't matter what your church background is, how old you are, the condition of your life, or what you've done in your past. Jesus wants all people to be his disciples and be baptized. He loves you and wants you to have a deep relationship with him.

Does this include infants and children?

Yes. We believe no one is too young or too old to be baptized. There is no minimum or maximum age.

Why does FOF practice infant baptism?

We believe that baptism is a sign and commitment of faith in Christ, but also a powerful way that God comes to us and instills faith. We think baptism is more than just a symbol. We believe it actually does something to a person.

If baptism is just an outward personal profession of faith, then it makes sense to wait until someone is old enough to make that choice for themselves. But if baptism is also a way that the Holy Spirit comes to us to work and strengthen faith, then it is a powerful way for parents to begin a journey of discipleship in their children.

Profession of faith is not the same as faith. We believe faith can exist before it can be articulated.

Does this mean infants can have faith?

Yes. Faith is often reduced to the strictly cognitive – believing the right thing and being able to articulate it. We believe faith is better understood as “dependency” and “trust.” Just as a newborn child can trust his mother, we believe an infant can “have faith” in God.

Faith is better understood as an inclination of the heart towards God rather than intellectual understanding alone. As faith grows, our understanding must grow with it, but this does not mean that faith cannot exist before understanding develops (or after it is taken, as in the case of Alzheimer's).

While baptism without faith is meaningless, God can (and does) use baptism to plant a seed of faith. Whether this seed sprouts and grows often depends on how a parent nurtures it.

How do I get baptized at FOF?

If you are ready to be baptized, complete the following steps:

1) **Step 1: Come to a baptism class.**

We offer these periodically throughout the year, typically on Sunday mornings. See the FOF website for upcoming dates.

Children K – 5th grade wishing to be baptized should attend one of our children’s ministry baptism classes for kids. Dates are posted on the FOF website.

2) **Step 2: Turn in a baptism form.**

Forms are available on the FOF website and distributed at each baptism class. Submit a separate form for each person in your family who is going to be baptized.

3) **Step 3: Get Baptized!**

Several times per year we have mass celebrations on Sunday morning where people come to be baptized, make public professions of faith in Christ, or become members of FOF. Pick one of these Sundays and inform one of our staff of your date selection. See the FOF website for specific dates.

Occasionally we get requests for private baptisms separate from an FOF Baptism Sunday. Because baptism is a connection with the body of Christ, we believe it’s important that it is celebrated with the body of Christ. Except in rare circumstances, we do not schedule private baptisms.

What should I expect that day?

Plan to arrive 30 minutes before the service. Invite family and friends to come and cheer you on! Bring a towel and be aware that no matter how much time you spend on your hair, your head will be soaked.

We’ll call you up one at a time or as a family. Anyone can come up with you. Because baptism is a proclamation of your trust in Christ, each person being baptized (who is old enough to answer) will be asked two questions—

- 1) Why is Jesus important to me?
- 2) Why do I want to be baptized (or have my child baptized)?

Once you’ve answered, we’ll pray over you and baptize you!

I’d like to be baptized by full immersion? Can I do that?

At FOF we baptize by pouring water on the head simply because we do not have the on-site ability to baptize by full immersion. If, however, full immersion is important to you, we can arrange to baptize you at a local pool, river, or lake. Contact us to make arrangements.

Does baptism make me a member of FOF?

No. Baptism makes you a member of the body of Christ, not FOF or another local church.

Many people choose to become members of FOF at the same time as their baptism, but this is not necessary. If you would like to consider becoming a member of FOF, see the website for info on how to take next steps.

What if I've already been baptized? Should I be baptized again?

No. You are not baptized into a specific church or denomination. You are baptized into Christ. As long as you were baptized into the Triune God in a Christian community, you do not need to be baptized again.

If you have any doubts or questions about a previous baptism, contact one of our pastors.

Can I renew my baptism?

Yes. We believe baptism is something we should live and renew daily.

If you would like to renew your baptism, follow the above protocol for how to get baptized. On a Baptism Sunday we'll ask you to make a profession of faith and state your desire to continue living your baptism out. We'll pray over you and mark you with water.

How do I know if I'm ready?

Ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Do I believe I'm a sinner?
- 2) Do I trust in Jesus as my Savior and Lord?
- 3) Do I want to immerse my life (or my child's life) into Him?

If you can answer yes, you're ready to be baptized! Don't delay.

Where do I get more info?

Start with our Baptism Study Guide, available on the FOF website. Our pastors can point you to some other incredible books and resources as well.