



Baptism at Peninsula Grace Church:
Overview & Preparation Guide

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Introduction To Baptism

Baptism is one of the most important steps a Christian can take in a life of following Christ. This booklet is intended to help you take this step by answering four questions:

- What is baptism?
- Who should be baptized?
- Why baptism by immersion?
- How do I prepare for baptism?

These are all important questions and it's important that we have good answers for them. Our hope is that the baptism process would remind you of God's great love for you, the mercy he has shown you, and the new life he has given you through faith in Jesus.

How to Use this Guide

We ask that you read this guide carefully and respond to the discussion questions at the end of each section on your own in writing.

Once you've completed this guide, please reach out to one of the pastors or the church office to schedule a meeting. During this conversation we'd love to answer any questions you have about baptism and review each of the discussion questions.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is a physical display of the full salvation Jesus has provided for us.

Baptism declares our restored relationship with God. All of us have rejected life with God by trusting ourselves instead of God and by doing what we want instead of what God wants. This rebellious lifestyle has separated each of us from God. In response to our rebellion, God sent his Son Jesus to live as a loyal subject of God's kingdom in our place. What's more, God poured out his wrath against sin onto Jesus by crushing him on the cross. The innocent one was punished instead of the guilty! God then raised Jesus from the dead to show that not even death had authority over him. He did all of this so that we who are rebellious could be considered loyal through faith in Jesus. Now, as loyal subjects, we can freely return to life with God!

Baptism is a physical response to this good news, and it paints a picture of the gospel in at least three ways:

- 1) ***Baptism symbolizes the cleansing from sin and renewal we receive through Jesus.*** In Acts 22:16 the Apostle Paul is told to "be baptized and wash away your sins." Peter 3:21 makes clear that the cleansing of baptism is "not the removal of dirt, but the pledge of a clean conscience." In Jesus those who were unclean because of sin have been purified by "the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). So while the act of baptism does not make someone spiritually clean it is a visible reminder that one has been washed by the blood of Jesus.
- 2) ***Baptism portrays our union with Christ.*** Read Paul's words from Romans 6:3-4 (see also Colossians 2:12).

"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

When believers are lowered into the water it is a picture of going down into the grave. That's because we are symbolically identifying ourselves with the death of Jesus. Like Jesus, though, we don't stay in the grave. Coming up out of the water is a picture of being resurrected from the dead to live an entirely new kind of life. As one theologian puts it, "baptism...very clearly pictures death to one's old way of life and rising to a new kind of life in Christ."
- 3) ***Baptism marks our entrance into the body of Christ.*** In 1 Corinthians 12 we read, "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." This means that part of the new life we are born into is an entirely new family, the church (see also Acts 2:38 and Ephesians 4:4-5). Baptism declares that we take following Jesus seriously enough to serve his people and invite help, accountability, and encouragement along the way.

Discussion: (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. What are some things you've heard previously about what baptism means?

2. Must a person be baptized in order to be saved? Why or why not?

3. If a friend asked you to explain the gospel, what might you say?

Who Should Be Baptized?

All those who have made a credible profession of faith in Jesus should be baptized.

If baptism is a physical display of the total salvation Jesus has provided for us, then only those who have placed their faith in Jesus should be baptized. This is the pattern that we consistently see in the New Testament. Here are a few examples of this pattern:

- After Peter preaches the first sermon after Pentecost, we read, “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:41)
- After Philip, another follower of Jesus, preached the gospel in Samaria, we read, “when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)
- See also Acts 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 32-33; and 1 Corinthians 1:16.

To be baptized without trusting Jesus to save you would be like putting a wedding ring on your finger even though you are single. Being baptized without faith no more makes one right with God than putting a wedding ring on makes a single person married. As a result, Peninsula Grace Church will not baptize anyone who has not made a credible profession of faith.

What constitutes a credible profession of faith? Three questions to consider:

- 1) ***Have you responded with faith to the good news of Jesus? If asked, how would you explain the good news of Jesus to someone?*** A true follower of Christ doesn't need to be able to articulate their faith with eloquence or fancy words- but a credible profession of faith should be accompanied by the ability to simply and clearly describe the gospel.
- 2) ***Do you confess Jesus as your Lord? Are you endeavoring (however imperfectly) to submit to his teachings as your king and master?*** If someone cannot confess, “Jesus is Lord!” then that person cannot be considered a Christian. If someone does not see Jesus as their Lord, then they have not placed their faith in Jesus. Scripture shows us that once our faith is in Jesus, our lives will change. This is because the Holy Spirit himself dwells inside all Christians.
- 3) ***Do you have meaningful relationships with other followers of Jesus who can encourage you and help you grow as a disciple?*** As you publicly declare your union with Christ, you are also presenting yourself as the newest member of God's family. Baptism is an invitation to God's people to gather around you, care for you, and help you learn how to live this new lifestyle. A credible profession of love for Jesus will naturally be accompanied by a love and investment into his people.

Discussion: (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. What or who did God use to draw you to himself?

2. What does it mean to call Jesus, 'Lord'? What obstacles have you faced in following Jesus as Lord?

3. What could it look like for you to serve and be served by others in this local church after your baptism? What reservations do you have about this?

Why Baptism By Immersion?

We strive to live as people under the authority of God and his Word. Through our study of Scripture, we have concluded that publicly immersing someone underwater is the way in which the New Testament instructs us to baptize. There are two main reasons we hold this position:

1. Peninsula Grace Church fully immerses someone's body under water because we believe that to be the plain teaching of the Bible. The original Greek word which we translate as "baptize" almost exclusively means "to plunge, dip, or immerse." Outside of the Bible, this same word was used to mean plunge, sink, drench, or overwhelm. Whether in the Bible or out, this word means to be fully immersed under water. If anyone had been sprinkled with water or if sprinkling was an acceptable way to be baptized, there were perfectly good Greek words the authors of scripture could have used (we see this in Hebrews 9:13, for instance).

2. The symbolism of being joined with Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection does not make sense if baptism is anything but being immersed under water. Consider again Romans 6:3-4:

"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Paul describes baptism as a landmark event that should assure Christians that they have been freed from sin and raised to new life. In this way your baptism by immersion is like a visible sermon that preaches the power of gospel. Your future as a follower of Jesus will contain moments of discouragement, doubt, and temptation. In these moments we can remember our baptism and the picture it paints of our new identity in Christ. Peninsula Grace Church believes that the biblical teaching on baptism requires us to fully immerse people under the water, and we find the symbolism of dying and rising to new life united with Jesus breathtaking.

Why Triune Immersion?

In addition to understanding baptism by immersion as the New Testament's instruction, we also encourage the practice of triune immersion. In this method of baptism, a person is dunked under the water three times. Matthew 28:19 tells us to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Notice that each person of the Trinity is invoked in the act of baptism. For this reason, our practice – along with all the churches of the Charis Fellowship – is to dunk someone first in the name of the Father, then a second time in the name of the Son, and then a final time in the name of the Holy Spirit. We believe triune immersion best reflects the triune nature of our God.

That said, triune immersion is not a theological hill we are willing to die on. Jesus cares far more about our heart motive than our precise mode of baptism. If you have any questions or concerns about this process, please talk with one of our pastors.

Discussion: (Respond to each of these questions on your own and then discuss your answers with a pastor).

1. Why do you want to be baptized?

2. How does knowing that you have been united to Christ and that God is living in you change the way you view yourself?

3. Are you ever tempted to doubt your relationship with Jesus? What do you think lies behind this doubt?

How do I Prepare for Baptism?

Prepare to Share Your Testimony

The word “testimony” can be a familiar one in church circles. At the same time, it can be a word that few of us understand. In a court of law, a person may be asked to share their testimony. There is something this person has seen or experienced that sheds new light on the case. At one point, the crime is shrouded in confusion. The witness is asked to retell what he saw and experienced and this testimony brings clarity.

Everyone is a part of the enormous story that God is writing. A Christian testimony is your small contribution to that grand story. We are not expected to explain everything that God has done, is doing, or will one day do. We are simply given an opportunity to retell what we have seen and experienced from God.

Your testimony is not a theological lesson but rather the story of God rescuing you from your rebellious lifestyle. When preparing to share your testimony with others, we encourage you to think of it in three stages:

1. Before Christ
2. Conversion
3. New Life

It may be helpful to see each of these stages as following the storyline of all great stories: Before, but then, after. The first stage is your opportunity to show others your life before God. What was the great need in your life? What were your failings or struggles? The key phrase to remember is step two, but then...

- I was hopeless, but then...
- I didn't care who I hurt or which bridges I burned, but then...
- I was strung out on drugs, heading for the grave, but then...

The “but then” stage focuses on the ways Jesus met your needs and revealed himself to you. This phrase and the story that immediately follows will grip your audience. We all want to know how and why someone changes. Too often, testimonies skip over the “but then.”

We go from “I was lost” immediately to “I am found and everything is great.” For some of us, this happened in a moment we will never forget. For others, it is a gradual process that takes place over years. In either scenario, there are moments, experiences, or realizations that can serve as landmarks on your journey back to Jesus.

No matter what kind of story we have, we have to believe that it is a story everyone is interested in. People are not necessarily interested in your life, but everyone is interested in the God who takes rebels and makes them family. Every testimony contains a miracle moment--you were dead and God made you alive again!

Finally, talk about what life is like now that you are following Jesus. Don't feel pressure to act like everything is perfect because we all know it isn't. Instead, talk about ways you see God still leading you, desires he has changed, and any evidence of your new life you have seen.

Testimony Writing Tips

In Acts 26, Paul stood before King Agrippa and shared simply and plainly the story of his life. Paul's testimony followed a guideline that can help you prepare your testimony.

Before Christ (Acts 26:4-11)

When writing about this stage of your life, consider the following questions:

- What was your life like before Jesus?
- How did you view God?
- In what ways were you rebelling against God?

In short, consider your pattern of living that made you deserving of God's judgment. If you are struggling with seeing yourself in any of these ways, read the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). In what ways have you disobeyed God's design for your life? The more specific you can be about who you were before Christ the more powerful your story will be for others.

But then... (Acts 26:12-20)

Share the specific ways God intervened in your life.

- Was there a particular person who consistently shared the gospel with you?
- Was there a particular Bible verse that God showed you?
- What did God use to draw you to Jesus?
- What showed you your need for a Savior?

This is a crucial part of the "sermon" your baptism preaches. You have just finished describing your sinful way of living, and now you get to show how God saved you! In the previous section, you said, "I was deserving of judgment." Here, you are saying, "this is how God saved me!"

New Life (Acts 26:21-23)

During the last few moments of sharing your testimony, focus on the difference Jesus has made in your life. Do you find yourself thinking, acting, or feeling in new ways? How has your relationship with Jesus affected other key relationships in your life (marriage, children, family, coworkers, friends)?

Don't feel pressure to act like you have everything together. Being open about struggles you are still facing can be a great encouragement to others. As you confess the trials you are facing, be sure to also acknowledge how your relationship with Jesus affects your struggles. End your testimony with a declaration that you have been given eternal life through faith in Jesus.

Testimony Review & Discussion

1. Is your story primarily about your salvation story or something else?
2. Is the hero of your story Jesus and his death, burial, and resurrection?
3. Would someone hearing your testimony be able to understand the gospel?

My Testimony

My life before Christ:

How I saw my need for Christ:

How I became a Christian:

My life now as a disciple of Jesus:

Baptism Checklist

- Review this packet titled, “Baptism at Peninsula Grace: A Preparation Guide” and respond to discussion questions.
- Write and edit your testimony (be prepared to share a 2-3 sentence summary of your testimony during the baptism service).
- Schedule a meeting with one of our pastors to review this packet and share your testimony.
- Invite friends, family, and co-workers to your baptism.

Bring with you:

- Swim trunks/shorts and t-shirt (dark shirt to maintain modesty)
- Change of clothes
- Two towels
- Plastic bag for wet clothes

*On the day of your scheduled baptism, please arrive at the church 30 minutes before the service.
A pastor will pray with you and walk through the service.*

Baptism Procedure/Guidelines Overview for person performing baptism:

1. Introduce yourself and the person you are baptizing.
2. Have the person being baptized shared why they want to be baptized. *(The person being baptized should respond with a 2-3 sentence summary of their testimony).*
3. Ask the following questions:
 - a. Do you confess that Jesus Christ is both your Savior and your Lord?
 - b. Do you believe that he died on the cross to save you from your sins, and that He rose from the dead and thereby defeated the evil in this world and in your life?
 - c. Will you continue to receive the Holy Spirit with awareness that it is the Spirit that leads, comforts, and empowers you to live a holy and fruitful life?
4. And then you will say:

“Based on the profession of your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and in obedience to his command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
5. And then you will baptize them, dunking them three times in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism Invite List

Make a list of any non-Christian family, friends, co-workers, etc. who you'd like to invite. Your baptism is a great opportunity for them to hear and see the gospel.

Make a list of any people who have played an important role in your journey to faith in Christ.