

Water Baptism



WYANDOTE
FAMILY CHURCH

Book #2 – The Meaning of Baptism

BAPTISM AT WYANDOTTE FAMILY CHURCH

Thank you for your interest in water baptism at Wyandotte Family Church! We hope this booklet and our water baptism class will help to give you a clearer understanding of our beliefs regarding water baptism here at Wyandotte Family Church. We believe these conclusions best represent the model and teaching of Scripture.

We recognize other churches may have slightly different views on the particulars of water baptism while maintaining the belief that we are all united under the Lordship of Jesus. For clarity,

Wyandotte Family Church baptizes those who believe in Jesus' resurrection and proclaim His Lordship over their lives by immersion in water. Baptism is a public, visible act of one's faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, one's identification with the person and work of Jesus Christ (including his death and resurrection), and one's willingness to submit every area of life under His authority.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a **sign** that points beyond the physical act of immersing oneself in water to one's belief in and commitment to the good news of Jesus. As Jesus died and rose again, we are called to identify with Him in His death and resurrection by symbolically dying and resurrecting with Him. Immersion in water is symbolic of being buried in the grave. Coming back up out of the water symbolizes one's new life in Christ Jesus, and prophetically foreshadows the future resurrection that will occur when Jesus returns at the end of the age.

Romans 6:3-5 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

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.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Baptism is an **act of obedience** to the commands of Jesus; some people consider it to be a person's first act of obedience as they confess Jesus' lordship over their lives. It is this confession by faith that brings someone into this unique relationship with Jesus. Baptism makes this confession public, though of itself does not bring you into a relationship with Jesus.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism serves as an **initiation into the family of Jesus**. Our participation in baptism unites us with other followers of Jesus who have also been baptized. As followers of Christ, we are called to fully participate in the community, or family of Christ. We are united by our unified commitment to Jesus’ lordship, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and our shared experience of water baptism, communion, and life in general. Not only does the individual confess Christ publicly, but by baptizing the individual, the church community affirms the genuineness of that confession.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews and Greeks, slaves or free.

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

As a church family, we celebrate baptism because each baptism is a story of the grace of God through Jesus Christ working in a person’s life, bringing out of death into life!

WHAT BAPTISM IS NOT

Baptism is **not salvation**. Salvation, or to be given right standing before God by faith in Jesus Christ, is a free gift that cannot be earned, bought, or bartered for. We are saved simply by the grace of God through faith in the resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Baptism is **not a prerequisite** for salvation. As mentioned earlier, water baptism is an act of obedience in response to receiving salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and His resurrection. One is baptized after committing themselves to the lordship of Jesus.

Baptism is **not instant perfection or holiness**. Every Christ follower is continually being made more and more into His image. This process, called sanctification, will only be complete when Jesus returns at the end of the age. There are times when we see miraculous deliverance from habitual sin when someone is baptized. Even in these wonderful cases, the individual still goes through the sanctification process as God shapes his or her character to be more and more like His own.

Baptism is **not a perk**. Being baptized does not give a person higher standing or extra benefits before God or in the church. It is a simple act of humble obedience in response to one’s confession of Jesus as Lord and expression of one’s praise and thanksgiving for God’s superabundant grace manifested in their lives.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

I **believe** in the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God, and **confess** that He is Lord over all. Therefore, I choose to **obey** the commands of Christ in the New Testament, I choose to **follow** Christ's example in all things, including baptism, and I choose to **declare** my commitment to Jesus in willingly and publicly both word and action so that others may follow Him too.

Matthew 28:18-20 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."

Acts 2:37-41 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?" 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. 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." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by our love for God and our desire to honor Him as Lord through our faithful obedience to the command and example of Jesus. Baptism, motivated by anything else (to please family or friends, to gain status, to make right past wrongs, etc.) does not honor God as Lord.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

As mentioned above, because baptism is an act of obedience in response to one's faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and commitment to following Him in all things, we practice **believer's baptism**: baptism occurring after someone believes in and commits to Christ. This is the consistent model we find in Scripture (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12, 35-38; 9:18-19; 10:47-48; 16:15; 16:29-34; 19:4-5).

WHAT IF I WAS BAPTIZED AS AN INFANT?

If you were baptized as an infant, we recognize that it is very likely a special, precious moment for you and your family that should be cherished and remembered. At the same time, we recognize that as an infant, you were still incapable of choosing to commit your life to Jesus, which is what baptism signifies, and we encourage you to be baptized again in response to your faith and commitment to Jesus.

Some churches practice "baptism of confirmation" for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their

child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed and is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible, which was only for those mature enough to believe. We celebrate with those who have been baptized as infants and confirmed as children/teens. At Wyandotte Family, being baptized the way Jesus demonstrated (even though many may have been “confirmed” as children) is a requirement to become a member.

Instead of infant baptism, we practice **child dedication**. In child dedication, families profess their commitment to raising their children in the way of Jesus, and the faith community affirms the family as the primary spiritual influence over a child’s life and commits to actively helping them in that endeavor. Together, Christ’s followers help one another, and their families follow Jesus, which includes helping one another raise their children as children of God in Jesus Christ.

However, with the permission and involvement of their families, **we do baptize children** who believe in the resurrection of Jesus and commit their lives to Him. To help a child make this decision, we invite him or her with the family to dialogue with us about their understanding of their faith in Jesus, their commitment to Him, and the significance of water baptism. In some cases, all involved may agree to wait on the child’s baptism to allow the child time to grow and understand their decision more fully.

Acts 8:12 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.

Acts 8:35-38 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.”

I’VE BEEN BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION BEFORE, SHOULD I GET BAPTIZED AGAIN?

Some individuals may have been baptized at one time but, at some point in their lives, stopped following Jesus and recently started following Him again. These situations are each unique and can be handled individually. In some cases, the individual may realize in hindsight that he or she did not understand the significance of their decision to follow Christ, or their motivation to be baptized was not in response to their faith in Him, in which case they can absolutely be baptized. In other cases, a person did understand their decision and maintained their belief and commitment to Jesus even through seasons of struggle or sin, and want to renew their commitment to following Jesus, in which case baptism would not be necessary, though we recognize such an act can be incredibly significant for the individual.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as a person **believes** in the resurrection of Jesus and **confesses** Him as Lord they can and should be baptized. In all the accounts of baptism in the Bible, baptism is rather immediate to a person believing in Jesus. One exception, as stated earlier, would be in the case of young children who may not fully comprehend what they believe and its significance for their lives.

At Wyandotte Family Church, we offer multiple opportunities for baptism throughout the year as a part of our main gathering.

Acts 8:35-38 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

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

WHY DO YOU BAPTIZE BY IMMERSION IN WATER?

At Wyandotte Family, we practice baptism by immersion¹ because this is the what we see in Scripture:

In the New Testament, βαπτίζω (baptizo) is the Greek word used for baptism and it means to plunge, immerse, or submerge. Many examples of baptism throughout the New Testament suggest that baptism was done by immersion (see examples below).

Baptism by immersion is the best picture and representation of our union with Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3-4).

John 3:23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized.

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.

Acts 8:38-39 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 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.

¹ Note: We know that there are times when a person cannot be immersed or submerged in water. In cases where immersion is not possible due to physical limitations, an alternate mode, such as pouring, will be practiced and is acceptable.

Romans 6:3-4 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.

WHO CAN BAPTIZE ME?

The Bible gives no prescribed requirements for who can baptize someone else. Therefore, we allow any follower of Jesus who has faithfully been baptized as a believer themselves to baptize others.

While the pastors, leadership, and staff at Wyandotte Family Church are available to perform baptisms, you are welcome to ask anyone who has played a significant role in your relationship with Christ to baptize you as long as they have been baptized as a response to their faith and commitment to our resurrected Christ, Jesus.

BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP AT WYANDOTTE FAMILY

Water baptism, as described in this booklet, is a requirement to be a Next Step Member at Wyandotte Family Church as it is one's act of obedience to Christ and public confession of his or her faith in and commitment to Jesus as Lord. This confession and commitment are then affirmed by the rest of the faith community, the church. The act of baptism also signifies the unity of Christ's followers, the church, and their commitment to following Him together.

Next Step Membership affirms your belief in and commitment to Jesus, which you share and participate in with the rest of the church. Water baptism is simply part of this corporately shared faith and devotion to Jesus.

NEXT STEPS AFTER WATER BAPTISM

We encourage you to keep taking next steps of obedience in your relationship with Jesus Christ. There are many different steps you can take. Below are just a few suggestions to talk over with your baptism class and coach.

- I will take a next step and start going through the new to the faith pathway (additional handout)
- I will take a next step by taking the tithing challenge and committing 10% of my income to the Lord. (additional handout)
- I will take a next step by joining a dream team and use my passions, pains, and proficiencies to serve others.
- I will take a next step and listen to the Holy Spirit teachings through the church app and learn more about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.