

baptism

Picture it:

Peter preaches the very first sermon following the resurrection and the crowd responds with deep remorse for the crucifixion of Christ. Their heartfelt response—*What shall we do?* - prompted Peter to challenge his listeners to respond in repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). His invitation did not fall on deaf ears or hard hearts as 3,000 responded and were baptized. What a day that must have been! The church was born and history has never been the same.

Throughout the book of Acts - the history of the early church - baptism immediately followed a person's decision to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Jesus instructed, "Believe and be baptized" (Mark 16:16), and that's what those who chose to align themselves with Jesus did. Jesus' words are a command for us to go public with our new faith. Baptism symbolizes the heartbeat of the gospel; the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

According to Romans 6:4, baptism identifies us with Christ's death (as we go under the water) and with his resurrection (as we come up). At baptism, the believer dies to the old person to become a brand new person who puts Jesus in charge of his or her life. Baptism has also been described as "the believer's marriage ceremony."

What is my first step if I want to be baptized?

Come to the front of the Worship Center during the decision song (usually at the end of the service). Once there, someone will walk you through the process. Or, during the week you can call us (812.334.0206) or email us any time.

If you are an adult, to schedule your baptism please contact Mary Moll (mmoll@socc.org) in the church office.

If you are the parent of a school-aged child, to schedule their baptism please contact Scott Newland (snewland@socc.org) or Cynthia Parkes (cparkes@socc.org) in the church office.

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When can I be baptized?

In Acts 8, a Christian named Philip comes across an Ethiopian man who was a non-believer. The non-believer decided he wanted to be a Christian and be baptized.

At the sight of nearby water he excitedly asks Philip, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

Philip went into the water with the Ethiopian man and baptized him on the spot.

The point, you ask? While the decision to become a Christian is a serious one, baptism can be pretty "spur of the moment" once your decision is made. If you would like to be baptized on the spot, we are happy to do that with you.

You may, however, like a little more time to process your decision and time to invite loved ones to this special occasion. If that is the case, you can plan your baptism during any of the worship services, or we can schedule your baptism with just family and friends at a time that works with your schedule.

baby recognition

Family Commitment Sunday

While infants can't choose baptism, we do give parents of infant children the opportunity to share in a Family Commitment service. If the semi-annual event does not fit your family's calendar, private services may be scheduled.

SOCC's Family Commitment Sunday is a time of public and personal commitment where parents promise to raise their child with godly principles, so that one day when they are ready and understand, they will choose to accept Jesus as their savior. To learn more about Family Commitment Sunday call the church office.

big questions (continued)

What if a school-aged child decides to follow Christ?

If a school-aged child in grades 1-5 expresses an interest in accepting Jesus as his or her Lord and being baptized, we encourage you to speak to someone in the Children's Department about your child being baptized.

If I was baptized as an infant should I be baptized again?

Our desire is not to be critical of any tradition you grew up with, but rather to be as closely aligned with the practice and teaching of the first century church as spelled out in the Scripture. If you choose to be immersed into Christ do not see such an act of humble obedience as a rejection of your past. Rather, view it as building upon the foundation of your past, a foundation carefully laid by those who love you. If you have further questions about this issue, please feel free to contact the church office.

Does the water wash away my sins?

Whether it's water in a lake or water in a baptistery, there's nothing special about the water that is used for baptism. The Bible is clear that we are saved by God's grace through the sacrifice of Christ. We do not believe in water regeneration. Our sins are cleansed by the blood of Christ at the cross. The connection comes in the fact that baptism is that experience whereby we are identified with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus which makes possible our salvation. (Romans 6:1-6)

Do you have to be baptized to be a follower of Christ?

It's clearly established in the Bible that you become a Christian by accepting God's free gift of grace. While baptism does not save, submission to baptism is—like our faith, repentance and confession of Christ—a part of the God-given instructions on receiving his gift. According to the book of Acts, repentance followed by baptism is the *occasion* whereby a person receives the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Though without sin, even Jesus, the perfect Son of God, submitted to baptism and demonstrated for us the importance of this divine command. And remember, at the very least, baptism is an act of obedience to a command of Christ.

What if I'm still not convinced?

Take some time to examine what the Bible teaches on the subject and pray about your concerns. Speak with someone from our church leadership about your questions—we would be happy to listen and offer any help. Let the Word and Spirit of God guide your heart and mind as you wrestle with the issue.

More Questions?

Please contact the church office if you have more questions about baptism. We will be happy to arrange for you to speak with one of our staff.

big questions (continued)

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While it seems pretty straightforward, many people have questions about baptism. How and when should I be baptized? Is baptism for babies, or people old enough to make that choice? Is it necessary for my salvation?

If you're struggling with the question of whether to be baptized, look closely at the meaning behind it. Honestly ask yourself, "Is this just a man-made religious boundary marker, or a biblical truth that God is asking me to live by?"

To help you find answers about being baptized, consider these common questions:

How should I be baptized?

While some churches sprinkle, baptism by immersion was the undisputed church practice for the first 1,300 years of church history. In fact, no early church leaders argued that point. The very word "baptism" comes from the Greek word, *baptizo*, which means "to dip, plunge or immerse." SOCC believes in following this biblical precedent closely. Sprinkling began later in church history as an alternative to the practice of the ancient church.

Should we baptize infants?

Some churches baptize infants. Some choose not to baptize infants. While Christians can debate this, we should never divide over it. At SOCC, we don't baptize infants because every baptism recorded in the Bible occurred when someone was old enough to make a personal decision regarding his or her faith in Jesus as Lord. Jesus blessed kids, but he didn't baptize them. See the section on Family Commitment Sunday.

What if an unbaptized child dies?

Infant baptism didn't become widely practiced until about 400 years after the birth of the Christian church when Augustine developed the theology of "original sin." Simply put, this idea means that when children are born, they are not only sinners, but God holds them accountable for their inherited sins. So if an infant died, Augustine believed that God would hold that child separate from the Lord for all of eternity unless the child was saved (through the sacrament of Holy Baptism). Given that the infant mortality rate was high in those days, the practice of infant baptism grew rapidly. SOCC believes there is an age of understanding when people are mature enough to grasp the concept of sin and one's need for a Savior. Those who die before they are capable of understanding that concept are covered by the grace of God and taken home to heaven for eternity.

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