



VALLEY
CHURCH

BAPTISM
WORKBOOK

HOW TO USE THIS MATERIAL:

This baptism class is designed to give an overview of the theological convictions on the topic of baptism and prepare believers who wish to be baptized for that special day.

OVERVIEW

We are so glad that you desire to express your faith in Jesus by getting baptized. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward confession and we hope that through this class you can come to a meaningful understanding of the action you are taking as a follower of Jesus.

This baptism class is designed to introduce you to what getting baptized is all about. In it we explain the gospel, our theology of baptism, answer some basic questions and lead you through the process of writing out your personal testimony.

#1: WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of 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. Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection and our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ.

What a person believes about baptism affects how they will perform the ordinance. Who should be baptized? When should they be baptized? How should they be baptized? All of these questions are answered as we reflect upon what baptism means.

#2. IS BAPTISM MERELY A SYMBOL?

Within the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries, the nature of the sacraments was fiercely debated, even between the various Reformers. Without attempting to justify any particular position, it is important to assert that baptism is in some mysterious sense a “means of grace,” in which God sanctifies and encourages His people. That said, it is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism is not and does not do:

1. **BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE.** Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, 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.³
2. **BAPTISM IS NOT “NECESSARY” FOR SALVATION.** Without in any way diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must also warn against thinking which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone

#3. WHY SHOULD ONE BE BAPTIZED?

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 2:37-41

Why Should One Be Baptized?

1. To obey the commands of Christ
2. To evidence that a person is a disciple of Christ
3. To follow the example of Christ

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. We have the opportunity to evidence our trust in and love for our King through obedience in this ordinance. If we think of baptism as a mere 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?" It should be our joy, and we should eagerly anticipate our participation in the ordinance.

While there are certain costs associated with baptism, the reward of obedience is always worth it.

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.

#4. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

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." MATTHEW 28:18–20

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. ACTS 2:41

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 8:12

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

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. ROMANS 6:3–4

We practice what is called "believer's" or "confessor's" baptism, which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through Acts, we find baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing and receiving the Holy Spirit. There is no explicit evidence to suggest that nonbelievers were baptized.

#5. WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

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

As soon as a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a regenerate believer refrains from obedience to the ordinance. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is rather immediate. If we have been united to Him, we should confidently draw near in obedience to His command and example.

#6. SHOULD A PERSON BE REBAPTIZED?

For those who were baptized by immersion at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not, indeed should not, be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or baptism by immersion before being born again and trusting Christ, your experience was not a true baptism, and thus you should be baptized.

A helpful question to ask yourself if you are thinking of being rebaptized 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.

#7. HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling we practice 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.

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. COLOSSIANS 2:12

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. ROMANS 6:3-4

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.

In addition, it is interesting to note the use of water to symbolize judgment in the Scriptures (e.g. the flood of Genesis 6-7 and the destruction of Egypt in the Red Sea of Exodus 14).

Thus, by passing through the waters of baptism, the believer expresses trust that God's judgment has been satisfied by Christ.

3. The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.

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... MATTHEW 3:16

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...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. MARK 1:5,10

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

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

#8. WHERE SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Although there are no prescriptions in the Scriptures for location, we prefer to practice the ordinance of baptism within the context of the local church in order to allow the congregation to affirm and celebrate together in a person's act of obedience and submission.

#9. BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP

We believe that baptism and church membership go hand in hand. Baptism is a way that the covenant members of the church affirm your faith in Christ and recognize you as a part of the body. Because of this we will only baptize those who in the same step desire to enter into membership with our local church. In that way we make sure that we are caring for and watching over those who we affirm as part of the body of Christ.

When it comes to church membership we require anyone wishing to join the church to have displayed obedience to Christ's command to be baptized following their conversion. Once baptism is complete the *Next Step* is to complete the membership process to formally join the church as a covenant member.

#10. HOW WE BAPTIZE AT VALLEY CHURCH

Typically baptisms take place as a part of our Sunday morning worship services. This allows the church and our family and friends to be able to witness and rejoice in the work God has done in your life together. If you desire to be baptized we encourage you to do so within the context of these gatherings.

Prior to baptism, participants are required to complete the baptism questionnaire which you will find at the end of this workbook. In it we will lead you through the steps of writing out your personal testimony. This allows our Elders to discern that you are a true follower of Jesus and that you have understood and responded to the gospel personally. The person performing the baptism will then use your testimony to share portions of it with the church as you come to be baptized.

The person performing the baptism will ask, "Do you confess and believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?" to which the baptizee will respond, "Yes" or "I do." The baptizer will then immerse and subsequently raise the baptizee out of the water while saying, "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 Romans 6:4 *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.*]

Some helpful hints for the day of your baptism.

1. Wear dark shorts and a dark shirt to maintain modesty.
2. Come to church dressed in what you will wear to be baptized
3. Bring a change of clothes, towel and bag to hold your wet clothes after you change.
4. Don't try and change right before the baptism service begins.

BAPTISM QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Baptism Class. Once you submit the questionnaire one of our Elders will be in contact with you to get to know you, talk about what Jesus has done in your life and schedule your baptism.

Personal Information

First Name: _____
Last Name: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

#1. Have You Been Baptized Before?

- Yes
- No

#2. If Yes, How Were You Baptized and Why Would You Like To Get Baptized Again?

#3. Explain Your Understanding Of The Gospel Using Only Scripture

Take some time to share with us scripture that has helped you to understand the message of the Gospel and what Jesus has done for you.

#4. How Did You Come To Follow Jesus?

Take a moment to review the following passages and how you respond personally to Jesus: the fact of sin (Romans 3:23); the penalty of sin (Romans 6:23); Jesus' payment for sin (Romans 5:8); the requirement to repent and trust Jesus personally (Romans 10:9-10) and Jesus' two invitations "Come to Me, Come Follow Me"? (Matthew 11:28-30 and Matthew 16:24-26).

#5. How Has Following Jesus Changed Your Life?

#6. Share About A Time When You Experienced The Grace of God.

What was the situation? How did experiencing the grace of God make you feel? How did that shape your relationship with God?

#7. Share Your Favorite Scripture.

If you have a favorite scripture passage that has meant a lot to you, share it here.
