

Baptism

[Bible texts from NIV unless otherwise noted]

TAKE THE PLUNGE

Baptize means “to dip something into a liquid or plunge it underneath the surface.” Think of cookies in milk or clothes in the washing machine. A big word for this is *immersion*. A smaller word is *dunking*.

When Philip baptized the Ethiopian official, the two men “went down into the water” and “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38, 39). Sounds like they both got pretty wet!



WHY BE BAPTIZED?

Here’s one good reason: Jesus did it! “John baptized him in the Jordan River” (Mark 1:9).

Jesus didn’t need to wash away His sins—He didn’t have any! But His baptism marked the official start of His work for God.



Something special happened at Jesus’ baptism. “He saw the Holy Spirit coming down on him like a dove. A voice spoke to him from heaven. It said, “You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you” (Mark 1:10, 11).

ATTEND YOUR OWN FUNERAL AND LIVE TO TELL ABOUT IT

Baptism is a symbol—an outward way of showing three major things that happen inside us when we choose to follow Jesus.



1. Our old sinful life dies.

Sin is our biggest problem. It causes death (see *FUN-da-Mental #10*). God wants to take sin out of our lives. By being baptized we show our choice to let God “kill” our sinful thoughts, desires, and actions.

2. We bury our sinful life, leaving it behind forever.

If something dies, it’s got to be buried, right? When we go under the water, it’s like burying our sinful past. Our sins are “washed away” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

3. We live again as a brand-new person with Jesus.

Fortunately, the pastor who baptizes you doesn’t keep you under the water forever! Moments later you come back up. You get to start life again as a follower of Jesus, not a slave of sin.

“By being baptized, we were buried with Christ into his death. . . . And like Christ we also can live a new life” (Romans 6:4).

BAD REASONS TO BE BAPTIZED

- “All my friends are doing it.”
- “My parents said I have to.”
- “Those baptismal robes look cool!”
- “I’ve always wanted to go swimming during church.”



GOOD REASONS TO BE BAPTIZED

- “I love Jesus and want to be part of God’s family.”
- “I want everyone to know I’ve decided to follow Jesus.”
- “I need God’s forgiveness. I want start a new life.”

HOW OLD DO I NEED TO BE?

Old enough to

- recognize the problem of sin in your life
- choose Jesus as your Savior
- understand the importance of your commitment to Jesus
- know God’s basic principles for living as a Christian

People are ready for baptism at different ages. But it’s safe to say your baby brother or sister isn’t old enough!

DO I HAVE TO GET BAPTIZED?

Yes and no. Jesus said, “Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Sounds like baptism is pretty important!

So does getting baptized save you? No—Jesus saves you. But getting baptized is the next logical step to take when you believe in Jesus.

Imagine that your grandparents give you a new car for your sixteenth birthday. “Thanks for the great gift!” you gush. You take the car out for a drive, then leave it at their house and walk home.

Wait . . . wouldn’t you take the car home and drive it every day? It’s yours, right?

Getting baptized is like saying, “Jesus, thanks for Your gift of eternal life. I’m ‘taking You home’ to be part of my life every day from now on.”

Some people will be in heaven even though they were never baptized. A good example is the thief on the cross, who accepted Jesus just before he died. But if you have the chance, you should definitely do it!

“What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:17, NLT).



WHAT ELSE HAPPENS AT BAPTISM?

- You join God’s family, the church (see *FUN-da-Mental #12*).
- The Holy Spirit begins working in your life in a special way (Acts 2:38). He gives you the strength to say no to Satan’s temptations. He also gives you the ability to share God’s good news with other people (see *FUN-da-Mental #17*).



HUGE BAPTISM

Just before He went back to heaven, Jesus told His disciples to baptize people who chose to follow Him (Matthew 28:19). They obeyed in a big way. After Peter’s first evangelistic sermon about 3,000 people were baptized (Acts 2:41)!

WHAT IF I SIN AFTER I’M BAPTIZED?

Baptism doesn’t mean you’ll never mess up again. It just means you’re officially starting life with Jesus. “Get to know him better,” and you’ll keep growing and becoming the person God wants you to be (2 Peter 3:18).