

A stylized Christmas tree graphic composed of overlapping, semi-transparent teal and light blue geometric shapes, including triangles and curved bands, centered in the upper half of the page.

# BAPTISM101

## Next Steps

Discipleship at Lifeway Baptist Church

# Preparing for Baptism

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## INTRODUCTION

Baptism is a special opportunity and privilege for Christians. You may be five years old, or you may be seventy-five. Either way, baptism is a part of your obedience to Christ and commitment to follow Him. Baptism is a first step in your life-long pursuit of Christ.

The pastors and deacons of Lifeway Baptist Church believe it is necessary to have a clear and purposeful vision for your spiritual growth. People do not passionately love Christ on accident. The Bible is clear that we need to be trained and discipled as we grow in grace together.

## WHY DO I NEED TO PREPARE FOR BAPTISM?

Baptism is an opportunity for believers in Christ to “count the cost”<sup>1</sup> and identify themselves with their Savior. Salvation and forgiveness of sin is freely given by grace,<sup>2</sup> but following Christ costs us our life.<sup>3</sup>

In the Bible, and throughout history, publicly identifying with Christ could cost you your life. Thank the Lord we live in a free country where that threat is almost unimaginable. While this is a blessing from God, if we are not careful, we can create an atmosphere that requires little or no commitment to Christ. This can lead to confusion and doubt in the face of persecution. Confusion and doubt are *not* the intended fruit of baptism.

The preparation process for baptism seeks to:

- Discern* the candidate's readiness for baptism
- Prepare* the candidate to count the cost of discipleship
- Fortify* the candidate's willful submission to follow Christ in a decisive way
- Encourage* further obedience and faithfulness to the Lord
- Equip* the candidate for membership in the local church
- Provide the candidate a healthy biblical *relationship* with the body of Christ that can affirm, support, encourage and pray for the candidate.

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<sup>1</sup> **Luke 14:28** – “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether we have sufficient to finish it?”

<sup>2</sup> **Ephesians 2:8-9** – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

<sup>3</sup> **Mark 8:35** – “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.”

## HOW OLD SHOULD I BE TO BE BAPTIZED?

The only discernible truth from scripture concerning age for baptism is that a candidate must be able to give a credible profession of faith. For this reason, the pastors at Lifeway take our responsibility with the local church seriously.

We acknowledge that every situation is different, but the joy of discipleship should not be rushed, especially with children. We do not set a mandatory age for baptism, but we encourage children to wait until they are old enough to understand this step of obedience. For children, we believe the parents have a key role in discipling their children and fostering a hunger to follow Christ. A good target age for a child who has placed their faith in Christ may be 8-12 years old.

## WHY WAIT TO BE BAPTIZED?

As pastors, we do not equip or serve the body of Christ when we prematurely affirm faith that is not in Christ alone. This can cause confusion, frustration, and unnecessary insecurities in people's lives. Our goal is not to cloud people's view of Christ,<sup>4</sup> our goal is to magnify Christ.

Young people should remember their baptism as being an informed and willful decision, confident in Christ's accomplishments for them on the cross and the grace of God freely received. This creates confidence, joy, and biblical motivation for pursuing Christ passionately.

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<sup>4</sup> **Matthew 23:15** - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

# What is Baptism?

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## 1. Baptize means *to immerse*.

Immersion is the meaning of the word “baptism.” For the Christian, though, its meaning is much richer and deeper.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Baptism is a symbol.

- a. of the death (going down into the water) and resurrection (coming out of the water) of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>
- b. of what God has accomplished in our lives. Baptism is a symbol of the spiritual change that God has *already accomplished* in our lives.
- c. of washing/cleansing from sin (forgiveness).
- d. of entrance into the body of Christ – the local church.

## 3. Baptism is an act of obedience.

Right before the church began, Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the good news of salvation and to baptize those who placed their faith in Christ. This command is to be obeyed, not ignored.<sup>7</sup> Baptism is also a physical act of following our new Master.

## 4. Baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ.

In baptism, we express, with our whole body, our heart’s acceptance of Christ as Lord.<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Baptism is a blessing.

Baptism does not save us, but it is a great blessing to be publicly identified with Christ. It is a blessing to you, and it is a blessing to the church body.<sup>9</sup>

As believers display their commitment to Christ, they are also displaying their desire to be committed to his body (the local church). This commitment provides continual blessing as we grow in grace together.

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<sup>5</sup> **Acts 8:38-39** - And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

<sup>6</sup> **Romans 6:4** - Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

<sup>7</sup> **Acts 2:38** - Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>8</sup> **Colossians 2:12** - Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

<sup>9</sup> **Galatians 3:27** - For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

# What's Next?

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## 1. Read the Baptism 101 information

Read the Scripture references and see what God's word says about Baptism.

## 2. Fill out the Baptism Candidate Form

The candidate helps you know what kind of questions we will ask when we meet. Writing an answer to a question usually requires more thinking to be articulate. Take your time and answer the questions as best as you can. The time you spend will help you share the Gospel with people and your testimony of salvation will be clear.

## 3. Submit your Baptism Candidate Form

*If you have a paper copy of the candidate form:*

Bring your form with you to a service and hand it to a pastor, or you can contact the church office to drop it off at your convenience.

*If you are filling out the digital candidate form:*

Just click submit, and Pastor Doug will receive an email with your form.



## 4. Meet with pastor Doug

We can't wait to sit down and get to know you better. After we receive your candidate form, Pastor Doug will contact you and set up a time to meet with you. If you are a woman, Pastor Doug's wife (or another woman from the church) will join us for the meeting. You may also ask a friend or mentor to join you. We encourage parents to attend with their children.

## 5. Continue to assemble with us and worship Christ

Discipleship is a life-long journey. As you take these first steps of obedience to Christ, remember to make reading Scripture a priority in your life. God makes us more like Christ as we spend time in His word and allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truth and live it out.