

DISCIPLES WHOLEHEARTEDLY
LOVING, LIVING AND REVEALING JESUS

baptism



GEORGES RIVER
LIFE CHURCH

Welcome

We are so excited you are considering baptism. If you are like most of us, taking this step comes with both excitement and a bit of apprehension. That's perfectly normal. Baptism is a significant step in a disciple's life and is something that Christians have been doing from the very beginning of Christianity.

Baptism is a public, symbolic act where a person declares that they are committing the whole of their life to becoming like Jesus, increasingly taking on His priorities and way of life (as seen in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

Baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality. Baptism is not a step you take to begin a relationship with God. The New Testament clearly teaches that salvation is based on faith alone in Jesus alone. It's not based on what we do, even something as important as baptism. Baptism is a step you take after a relationship with God has already begun. It's an act of "going public" with a private decision to trust in Jesus.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."*

This booklet is not a comprehensive look at all that surrounds baptism. Rather it is designed to offer some answers to some of the most commonly asked questions people have about Christian baptism as well as the significance of baptism.

Your questions are not only welcomed, but they are also essential! Depending on your faith background and church history, baptism can bring to mind different thoughts and questions. Please know this is a safe place to wrestle with anything that is confusing to you about faith or the church. Thanks for joining in this conversation. Let us know how we can help encourage you in your faith journey!

What is the meaning of baptism?

It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *"...Christ died for our sins...he was buried, that he was raised on the third day."*

Colossians 2:12 *"...having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."*

It illustrates my new life as a Christian.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

Romans 6:4 *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

Baptism doesn't make you a believer, but it shows that you already believe. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it is the outward symbol of the inward commitment.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Why be baptised by immersion?

The word 'baptise' comes from the Greek word 'baptismo', which means "to immerse with water."

Because Jesus was baptised that way.

Matthew 3:16 *"As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him."*

Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

Acts 8:38-39 *"...then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him."*

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

ROMANS 6:4



Who should be baptised?

Every person who has placed their faith in Christ.

Acts 2:41 *"Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."*

Acts 8:13 *"Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw."*

Acts 8:12 *"But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women."*

Those who have repented of their sin.

Acts 2:38 *"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."*

Those who are on a journey to spiritual maturity.

Galatians 3:27 *"For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."*

Those who have accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour and who have decided to follow Him in obedience for the rest of their lives are able to be baptised.

The Bible teaches that baptism is one act that occurs in a person's life. Baptism is not something that should be unnecessarily repeated. For this reason, we believe that individuals should wait until a time when their baptism will be significant and long remembered.

Eph. 4:5 *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism."*

Baptism is a significant step in our spiritual journey. By being baptised, we are stating that we want our whole life to be orientated around becoming more and more like Jesus.

Why should I be baptised?

To follow the example that Jesus set.

Mark 1:9 *"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan."*

Because Christ commanded it.

Matthew 28:19-20 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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."*

It demonstrates that I am a follower of Jesus.

Acts 18:8 *"...and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptised."*

1 John 2:3 *"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands."*

Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward commitment to becoming like Jesus, increasingly taking on His priorities and way of life.



Baptism and becoming like Jesus

Jesus was a Jew and, in the time of Jesus, the Jews were very used to seeing people and things being baptised. Most Jews washed themselves and their utensils for ceremonial reasons, but they also would have seen another form of baptism – a baptism of discipleship.

When a Gentile or non-Jew converted to Judaism, they were to undergo a type of baptismal ceremony that demonstrated their conversion (called a 'tebilah'). In this way, a person would enter the water as a Gentile (non-Jew) and then rise out of the water as a Jew. It was a symbolic gesture that demonstrated the death of the Gentile person and a type of rebirth of that person into a Jew. They would no longer consider themselves to be a Gentile; they would no longer follow Gentile ways nor align themselves with Gentile laws or kings or religions. They were now a Jew whose allegiance was to be completely Jewish in every way.

In Jesus' day, there were many Jewish Rabbi's (or what we would call a teacher) and some people might decide to become a disciple, a student or, in our language, an apprentice of a particular Rabbi. The baptismal ceremony was a public declaration of your discipleship to that Rabbi. You would no longer live according to your way of thinking or your way of life; you would now give yourself to your Rabbi's way of thinking and their way of life. You also could not be considered a disciple of one rabbi and be baptised into the name of a different Rabbi. Once you were baptised into the name of a Rabbi, then you literally followed them around, night and day, and learnt from them and lived their way of life. A disciple's desire and highest priority was to become like their Rabbi.

Baptism is a public, symbolic act where a person declares that they are committing the whole of their life to becoming like Jesus, increasingly taking on His priorities and way of life – *becoming more and more like Jesus.*

Jesus' baptism

Mark 1:9-13 *"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him."*

As Jesus comes up out of the water, he sees the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like dove, and he hears the Father say, 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' This happens before Jesus begins his public ministry. He is affirmed as God's beloved Son.

The whole Christian gospel (the 'gospel' is the good news that King Jesus has come, and we can live now in his kingdom, under his rule in our lives) could be summed up in this point: that when God looks at us, at every baptised and believing Christian, he says to us what he said to Jesus on that day. He sees us, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Jesus Christ. "You are my son, you are my daughter, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." It sometimes seems impossible, but it's true.

**God looks at us and says, "You are my dear child; I'm delighted with you."
God speaks these words over you at your baptism and every day after. This
truth is the foundation of our new identity.**

As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy."

Mark 1:10-11



My child or teen wants to be baptised

At Georges River Life Church, we believe God is for children, and He is super keen to begin His forever friendship with them now, not just when they are adults. While it can look a little different when we are kids, children have the capacity to respond to Jesus and make that decision to be His forever friend as well, and therefore we believe children can participate in believer's baptism.

Baptism is a big deal though – while it doesn't make us a Christian, it is a one-time grand announcement of your faith in Jesus, so we understand (just like adults) that it's important to be wise with this decision. As a parent, you need discernment if your child's desire for baptism is paired with a good understanding of what it means. Here's the thing: there is no 'right' age or action to indicate your child is ready. It's hard to know exactly when anyone is ready because baptism is an outward expression of an inward choice to follow Jesus.



Here are some things we suggest that might help you in this process:

Show and explain to your child what it means to be baptised even before they have showed an interest.

Talk about when and why you got baptised, what it means, and make it a priority to bring them to the All in Services (we try to pair them up with the baptism days so your children can hear the testimonies) and to go to the park to see people getting baptised so they are exposed to it.

Let your child initiate the conversation about their own baptism.

If they grow up hearing about and seeing baptisms, when they initiate the conversation about their own baptism they are more likely to have a good understanding of it.

If your child comes to you and asks you about baptism, talk about what baptism announces to people and why we do it (you can use the verses in this booklet).

If they can express a personal understanding of baptism and you have been able to see that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus- then great! If not, you can use this opportunity to talk more about Jesus, His love, and what it means to be His disciple and friend.

Chat to your child's POD leader (River Kids and/or youth) so we can partner in this discussion with you and your child.

Your child's leader can help discern with you if your child is ready and have fruitful conversations with them!

What now?

1. If you would like to get baptised or just find out more about baptism, fill in the interest form:

- Go to grlc.org.au/baptisms/ and click on the '*I'd like to know more*' button

OR

- Scan the QR code:



OR

- Complete the paper form, over the page...
2. One of the Pastors will contact you and arrange to meet and talk with you about how you came to know and follow Jesus and what brought you to the decision to be baptised.
3. A couple of weeks before the day of your baptism, we would like you to attend a pre-baptism meeting where:
- We will open the Bible to learn more about the significance of baptism and hear from others who are getting baptised.
 - We will help you to prepare a personal testimony to share with the church on the day of your baptism of how you came to know Jesus and what brought you to the decision to be baptised. For many this can be a scary thing, so we will endeavor to support you as much as we can in the process. Testifying to what Jesus has done for you and how much Jesus means to you is a powerful thing and encourages the whole church.
 - We will walk you through what will happen on the day of your baptism including all the practicalities, time and place, inviting family and friends, what to wear, who will baptise you, etc.
4. On the day of baptisms,, we invite you to tell your testimony in the church service (either the service that you regularly attend or both).
5. In the weeks following your baptism, someone from the pastoral team will connect with you, helping you to continue to follow Jesus.

BAPTISM INTEREST FORM

Today's Date:

Name (first and last name):

Date of Birth (children only):

Address:

Phone:

Please answer the following:

1. Why do you want to get Baptised?

2. Have you ever been baptised by immersion before?

Yes / No

3. If 'Yes', in which church?

4. Do you currently attend Georges River Life Church?

Yes / No

a. If 'Yes', how often?

Regularly / Occasionally

b. If 'No', do you attend another church on a regular basis?

Yes / No

c. If 'Yes', which church do you currently attend?

5. Are you a member of a Small Group or PoD?

Yes / No

6. If yes, who is your Small Group or PoD Leader?



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