

A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING

# Baptism

# Introduction

We at Westlake Church are excited about the interest you have shown in being baptized. We would like to help you during this important process. Our hope is to provide you with a tool to discover God's plan of salvation for your life. This guide is divided into two sections:

- **[?]Westlake's View on Baptism**

This material is our biblical understanding of the act of baptism.

- **Baptism Key Details**

If you choose to get baptized at Westlake, this section will give you a breakdown of the process leading up to and the day of your baptism.

At any time if you have questions, please feel free to contact one of our Pastors at the church office at 317-241-9451.

## **Westlake's View on Baptism**

Have you ever thought about getting baptized but have too many questions still unanswered? We would love to help you gain a Biblical understanding about this significant, next step in your journey of following in the footsteps of Jesus.

### **Why should I consider getting baptized?**

#### Following Christ:

In order to understand the reason for being water baptized, it is important to carefully consider what the Bible says about it... Jesus himself was baptized. He was not a sinner, yet he humbled himself in obedience to identify with us and give us an example to follow. "At this time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. The moment he came out of the water, he saw the sky split open and God's Spirit, looking like a dove, come down on him. Along with the Spirit, a voice: "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life." (Mark 1: 9-11 The Message)

#### An Act of Obedience:

Water baptism is an act of faith and obedience to the commands of Christ.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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." (Matthew 28:19-20)

#### A Public Declaration:

Baptism declares that you are a follower of Jesus Christ. It is a public confession of your faith in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ. It is the next step after salvation through repentance and faith and is an important foundation for the Christian life. Then he said, "Go into the world. Go everywhere and announce the Message of God's good news to one and all. Whoever believes and is baptized is saved." (Mark 16:16 The Message)

### **What is the meaning and significance of baptism?**

#### A Move From Death to Life:

Baptism is a symbol of Christ's burial and resurrection. Our entrance into the water during baptism identifies us with Christ's death on the cross, His burial in the tomb, and His resurrection from the dead. "Going under the water was a burial of your old life; coming up out of it was a resurrection, God raising you from the dead as he did Christ. When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ's cross." (Colossians 2: 12-14 The Message)

### A Brand New Life:

It is a symbol of your new life as a Christian. We bury the ‘old life’ and we rise to walk in a ‘new life’. Baptism is like a wedding ring, it is the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart, a commitment that has to be followed through and lived out on a daily basis.

### Here is one simple way to explain baptism:

Baptism is a symbol. It’s meant to show the world that you love, trust, and have put your hope in Christ. It’s like a wedding ring... Let’s say I’m not married right now, but if I put a wedding ring on my finger, would that make me married? No, of course not. Similarly, I can be baptized in a church, but that doesn’t make me a true believer in Christ. Imagine that I really was married, though. My spouse and I really did go through the marriage ceremony, but I just didn’t have my ring on my finger. Would that mean I wasn’t married? No way, of course I would still be married. Similarly, I can be a believer in Christ, but not baptized, and my sins are still paid for and forgiven by God. But imagine that I truly was married and I really, really loved my spouse. Would I wear my wedding ring? Of course! I would love my spouse and want the whole world to know it! In the same way, if I have trusted Christ to save me from sin, and He is the lord and joy of my life, then I’ll want everyone to know about it. So baptism is a statement to everyone who sees it that I have trusted Christ for my salvation and I’m committed to living for Him.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5: 17)

“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)

Baptism does not make you a believer; it shows that you already are one! Baptism does not ‘save’ you; only your faith in Christ does that.

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

### A New family:

Baptism also connects us to the ‘body of Christ’, his people in the earth. In baptism there is a real sense of being joined with other believers, not just participating in an individual act of our own spiritual journey.

“...For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...” (1 Corinthians 12: 12-13)

## **How are we to be baptized?**

As per the example of Jesus – by being immersed in water. The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word “baptizo” which means “to immerse or dip under water”. “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.” Matthew 3:16.

Every baptism in the Bible was by immersion under water. The book of Acts shows us that this was the norm for every believer. “...then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water....” (Acts 8: 38,39)

## **Who should be baptized?**

Every person who has made the decision to believe in Christ. When Paul writes to the believers in Rome, he assumes that all of them have been baptized (Romans 6). The one requirement for baptism is belief in Christ!

“Those who accepted his message were baptized....” (Acts 2: 41)

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8: 12)

We believe in baptizing children when they are old enough to understand what it means and make a personal declaration of belief. (Usually, the age of 9-12 years old is sometimes a good benchmark.)

## **When are we to be baptized?**

As soon as a person decides to believe in Christ, he can be, and is encouraged to be baptized.

“Those who accepted his message were baptized....” (Acts 2: 41)

“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” (Acts 8:35-39)

## **Should a person ever be rebaptized?**

Rebaptism is allowed for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism experience because they don’t remember it, they were coerced, or their heart was not right with God at the time. Anyone who has fallen into sin after having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but rebaptism is not necessary (Acts 8:13-24).

## **Must a person be baptized during a worship service?**

No. In fact, the biblical model was “immediately” (Acts 8:38, 16:33), yet baptisms during worship services are encouraged at Westlake because they provide the opportunity to testify to your faith and show humility.

## Baptism Key Details

Each baptism candidate should write a few sentences of what baptism means to you. Include when you committed your life to Jesus Christ, any description of what happened which you would like mentioned, any instrumental persons, and why you want to be baptized. We need this in writing at least one week before the baptismal service. You can give it to a pastor personally, drop it by the office, or email it to one of the pastors. We will use what you've written to personalize your baptism.

**These are the practical instructions regarding the actual baptism.**

1. Enter the dressing area quietly, find an empty dressing room (there are four of them), lock the door, and change into what you want to be baptized in. Please whisper in the dressing area as sound does carry into the worship center.
2. Once you are dressed to be baptized, come into the platform stairwell and onto the landing area out of view from the congregation. The baptizing pastor will enter the dry area behind the baptismal tank and motion for candidates to enter the water. When the pastor motions for you, walk down the steps and stand facing the congregation. Children or short persons will want to stand on the seat in the tank so that the congregation can see them.
3. Relax. You are in good hands. Enjoy the baptismal experience and cherish its meaning. Then live out its symbolism each day.
4. The baptizing pastor will introduce you and summarize what you said in the testimony you submitted. Once the pastor is ready to baptize, the candidate will then sit on the seat and will be facing the stairs.
5. When the pastor says "*Upon your profession of faith I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,*"
  - a) Put your left hand on the back of your right wrist and tighten your fingers around it.
  - b) Grab your nose with your right hand – if you want to hold your nose when you go under.
  - c) Bend backwards at the waist and the pastor will help you sit back up after being totally submerged in the water.
6. When you come out of the water, wipe the water from your face, and stand up slowly. The church will likely be celebrating by clapping.
7. Exit the baptistery, return to your dressing room (unless there are others you want to see baptized), and change into dry clothes. Remember to be quiet. You can exit the dressing area into the hallway when dressed.

## WHAT TO BRING

1. Clothes to change into for actual baptism. You may want to wear shorts and a shirt or long pants. It is recommended that women do not wear a white T-shirt.
2. Towel. You'll need something to dry off with as you will be completely immersed in the tank of water.

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