

BAPTISM



*Life*house
CHURCH

BAPTISM AT LIFEHOUSE CHURCH

Thank you for your interest in getting baptized! Our hope in providing this baptism booklet and in offering the baptism class either in person or online is that these tools would help to give you a clear understanding of the biblical truths on the topic of baptism.

We will begin by looking at what baptism is, and is not, why a person should be baptized, who should be baptized, when a person should be baptized, how a person should be baptized, and who can baptize a person. We will also talk about what you can expect when you are baptized, and offer more biblical texts on baptism if you would like to do further personal study.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is one of the two ordinances (along with Communion) that Jesus Christ gave as visible signs of His grace to His church. Both Baptism and Communion give a believer the opportunity to remember, reflect on, and live out the gospel truth in our lives. Baptism preaches the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ in a believer's life. Baptism is a response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in our heart and life and it is an outward sign of a person's inward faith. Baptism does not save you, but rather shows what you already believe. It is our public proclamation that we have been saved by the grace of God in Christ.

One of the distinctives in the Lifehouse Church Statement of Faith is believer's baptism. The practice that we find throughout the New Testament for baptism is post conversion by immersion into water.

We believe in and practice baptism by immersion after trusting in Jesus as Lord and Savior because in the bible we see baptism as:

a **Command** from Jesus to follow obediently,

a **Symbol** of our union with Christ, and

a **Celebration** of Jesus' saving grace in our individual life within the church family.

Baptism is a Command

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 28:18-20

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38

Baptism is a command given to those who have trusted in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Therefore, baptism is not an option for those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ, but rather baptism is something that should be done by believers as an act of obedience to the commands of scripture. This command allows a believer to make an outward sign or expression of obedience to the inward belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a Symbol

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

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

As a symbol, our baptism makes clear several important truths:

- The believer's union with Christ in His death and resurrection
- The believer's cleansing and the washing away of sin
- The new life in Christ the believer walks in

Our baptism puts the truth of the gospel on display for all to see. Baptism is a clear picture of dying and rising with Jesus Christ and of the washing away of our sins. It is an outward sign of an inward change that happens by faith in Jesus Christ. It shows that we are in Christ and Christ is in us—that we are united with Him. One of the greatest truths of being a Christian is our union with Christ and baptism is a symbol of this truth.

Baptism is a Celebration

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Our baptism is not only a symbol of our union with Christ, but also a symbol of inclusion in the body of Christ—the church. If we are in Christ then we are a part of His body, the church. We see that baptism is both an individual act and also communal and familial event in the life of a local church.

As a church family, we celebrate baptism because each baptism is a story of the grace of the gospel working in a person's life. Each baptism reflects a story of heart and life change—a person who was once dead who has now been made alive in Christ. We will always celebrate stories of the gospel saving, sustaining, and transforming people's hearts and lives!

WHAT BAPTISM IS NOT

As we talk about what baptism is as a Command, Symbol, and Celebration, it is also important for us to talk about what baptism is not and what it does not do:

- **Baptism in itself is not salvation.** Scripture is clear that salvation is a gift of grace. We are saved by grace through believing by faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith. Baptism displays what God has already done in your heart.
- **Baptism is not something you can do on your own or in secret.** It's not the inner prayer of the heart, or the deed that goes unnoticed. Even Jesus could not baptize himself, John had to baptize Him. So too we need to step forward for someone to baptize us. It's to make clear to all, that I have let go of the world, no longer a slave to sin, and am now lead as Jesus was through the baptism waters, confirming my surrender.
- **Baptism is not for perfect people.** You don't have to clean yourself up or conquer all of your sin and struggles in order to be baptized. As Christians our lives are continually formed as we are a people of process, growth, and change throughout our lives. There is not a standard that has to be met. You simply have to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to be baptized.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, 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

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?" 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. 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." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:37–41

In light of looking at what baptism is and is not, that leads us to answer the question of why should a person be baptized? Here are three reasons to be baptized:

- To **obey** the commands of Christ in the New Testament
- To **follow** Christ's example in being baptized
- To **show** that I am a follower and disciple of Christ

Baptism is not merely a responsibility in the life of a believer, but rather it is also a privilege in the life of a believer. Baptism is an opportunity to put on display and give evidence to the saving grace of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer. It gives us the privilege of making a public proclamation to Jesus being our Savior, Lord, and King.

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by our desire to glorify God through our faithful obedience to the command and example of Jesus. You should not pursue baptism to please a friend or family member, or because you want to re-dedicate your life to Christ, or because you want to jump start your faith. Once again, baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith and the glory of God should be our motivation for baptism.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

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

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

Acts 8:35-38

At Lifehouse Church we practice believers baptism, not infant baptism.

Believer's baptism means getting baptized after you have decided to trust in Christ and made a profession of your faith in Him.

In reading the New Testament, we find baptism continually practiced after repentance and faith in the life of a believer. Baptism is a response to the saving work of the gospel in the life of a believer. This means that if you have believed in Christ and confessed Him as Savior and Lord, then you can and should be baptized.

Believer's Baptism and Infant Baptism

There are typically two views on baptism within Christian churches: believer's baptism and infant baptism. We will briefly unpack these two views of baptism for you to understand:

- **Believer's Baptism** To summarize, baptism is a response to the saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is an outward sign of an inward faith in Jesus through a decision made by the believer.

- **Infant Baptism** There are various modes and reasons that some churches/denominations practice infant baptism:

- **They believe in baptismal regeneration.**

- Baptism is practiced on infants as the means of salvation for the infant. Essentially, an infant is saved or regenerated by being baptized. It is a means of saving grace.

Our Response: We do not agree with this doctrine or practice as the bible is clear in its teaching that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus. We see no biblical evidence whatsoever for baptismal regeneration.

- **They look at church tradition.**

- Infant baptism is seen as the New Covenant equivalent to what circumcision was in the Old Covenant. Infants are baptized to show that they are a part of the church.

Our Response: We believe that the practice of circumcision was done away with in the Old Covenant, so baptism is not the New Covenant equivalent. We don't see biblical evidence for baptizing infants to make them a part of the church.

- Infant baptism is an expression of faith in the promises of God. An infant's baptism is a way for the parents and church to show their faith in trusting God to save the child.

Our Response: We believe that we don't have to baptize infants to express faith in the promises of God. However, we do practice child dedication, which is simply the church affirming that parents are the primary spiritual influence and shepherds of their children. As a church, we want to come alongside parents to encourage, equip, and empower in their ministry to their children and we will seek to point children to Jesus every opportunity we get.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

In essence a baby doesn't have the ability to choose for itself yet, whether to believe or not, and therefore cannot be baptized. The choice of faith comes after the conviction of the Holy Spirit toward a person that has come of age where the discernment of right and wrong has become clear, and where one becomes aware of the nature of sin within a person and the realization that one cannot save oneself.

I've Been Baptized Before, So Should I Get Baptized Again?

If your baptism was prior to you placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then you should be baptized. This means that if you were "baptized" as an infant and your baptism was not a response to your own saving faith in Jesus, then this was not actually baptism and we would encourage you to get baptized for the first time.

As believers we are a people of process, growth, and change. We all continue to grow in our relationship with Christ and in our formation in Christ. While we might have seasons and periods of growth and also seasons and periods of struggle and stagnation, we can only be baptized one time as a believer in response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in our heart and life.

This means that your baptism is true and valid if it happened as a believer even if you have gone through periods of struggle, sin, or suffering since that baptism. There is no need to be baptized again to show that you are committed to Christ or because you feel like you have grown since you were first baptized.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Acts 8:35-38

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** in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior, then they can and should be baptized. In all the accounts of baptism in the bible, baptism is rather immediate to a person believing in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In answering the question, when should I be baptized? Right away if you have trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior!

In our practice of baptism at Lifehouse Church, we offer multiple opportunities for baptism throughout the year and would encourage a new believer to get baptized at the soonest possible opportunity

HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

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 he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And 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

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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

At Lifehouse, we practice getting dunked, submerged under the water. We believe that a person should be baptized by immersion instead of being baptized by sprinkling or having water poured on you.

Why we practice baptism by immersion:

- βαπτίζω (baptizo) is the Greek word used in the New Testament for baptism. It means to plunge, immerse, or submerge.
- The many examples of baptism throughout the New Testament show proof for baptism by immersion (see above texts of John 3:23, Matthew 3:16, Acts 8:38-39).
- Baptism by immersion is the best picture and representation of our union with Christ. Immersion provides a picture of a believer being united with Christ in His death (submerged into the water) and in His resurrection (raised up from the water).

WHO CAN BAPTIZE ME?

The bible gives no prescribed requirements for who can perform a baptism. Therefore, within the context of the church, we allow any believer, whether male or female, who has faithfully been baptized as a believer themselves to baptize others at any given opportunity.

While the Lifehouse pastors, elders, and staff are available to perform baptisms, you are also able to ask a leader, a mentor, a parent, or a friend to be the one that baptizes you. We encourage you to ask someone who has been a personal spiritual influence on you as long as they have been baptized as a believer in response to the person and work of Jesus Christ in their heart and life.

BAPTISM OPPORTUNITIES

- And baptism can take place in any place or location where there is enough water available for the baptism like a bath, pool, river, lake, ocean.
- Everyone being baptized is encouraged to share a two-sentence testimony on their faith in Jesus
- After your testimony, the person baptizing you will state, **“Based on your confession and faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”**

HELPFUL BAPTISM HINTS

We will provide a shirt for you to be baptized in. Please wear dark shorts and swimsuit to maintain modesty.

- Encourage family and friends to join in for this very special event in your life.
- Please plan to arrive a bit earlier for the service to receive your baptism shirt and you will receive communication through email with further details of when and where to arrive.

FOR FURTHER STUDY ON BAPTISM

If you are interested in further study on baptism, here are relevant biblical texts for you to read and study:

- Matthew 3, 21, 28
- Mark 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16
- Luke 3, 7, 11, 12, 20
- John 1, 3, 4, 10
- Acts 1,2,8,9,10,11,13,16,18,19,22
- Romans 6
- 1 Corinthians 1, 10, 12, 15
- Galatians 3
- Ephesians 4
- Colossians 2
- Hebrews 6, 9
- 1 Peter 3

Feel free to contact us for any inquiries

Lifehouse office: 076 990 0359
Email: admin@lifehousechurch.org.za