

People come to Door Creek Church from a variety of backgrounds. Often they come with questions about what we believe and teach about many issues and practices at Door Creek Church. Here is a brief, practical summary of our belief and practice regarding baptism.

"I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of age."
(Matthew 28:18-20 NLT)

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

We believe baptism is one of the two outward rites (the other being the Lord's Supper, sometimes called Communion or the Eucharist) that Jesus commanded his church to perform. Each may be described as the Word of God enacted. We practice baptism because our Savior by precedent (Matthew 3:13) and precept (Matthew 28:18-20) gave authority for its observance.

New Testament baptism had its origin in the command of Christ to make disciples and baptize them (Matthew 28:19). The word "baptism" is an untranslated Greek noun whose verb form means, in its primary sense, "to dip, to immerse." The action words in the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20 are "Go, make disciples, baptize, teach." In the original language, *make disciples* is the only imperative; the other action words are participles that tell how one does that.

In essence the action is an extremely simple one, though filled with meaning. It consists in a going under the baptismal water in the name of Christ (Acts 19:5) or, more commonly, the Trinity (Matthew 28:19) and so identifying oneself as belonging to him and his church. And because Christ himself commanded it, Christ followers (individuals who have placed personal faith in him as Savior and Sovereign) willingly submit to it as an act of obedience.

WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM?

A Wedding Illustration

One way to grasp the meaning of baptism - and what it doesn't mean—is to imagine a wedding. The bride and groom stand side-by-side in the front of the church. They take turns in promising, "till death do us part." These two young lovers don't look any different on the outside, but in just a few moments they will be married—united for life by invisible cords. In order to signify that unseen union, the bride and groom exchange rings. These bands of gold tell the world that they are now married—that a permanent change has happened to them.

Now imagine that an unmarried couple is watching. They decide that they want to be married too. So they give each other rings right there where they sit. No commitments, no vows made, just the *symbols* of union exchanged. As they walk out of the church, their hands, like those of the bride and groom, bear the accepted token of lifetime love. But only the couple that has made the public commitment to each other is really married.

The point is that *symbol is not substance*. Marriage depends on a commitment, not on bands of gold. The same is true of becoming a Christian. What may outwardly identify you as a believer does not *make* you one. Putting on wedding bands is not the same as being married. They are fitting symbols and full of meaning, but without the reality of commitment, a ring-like baptism—is void of meaning. You must choose Christ, and you must choose baptism for the ordinance to have the meaning intended by Scripture.

You don't have to be baptized to have Christ, any more than a bride and groom have to exchange rings to be pronounced husband and wife. But if the inner commitment to trust Christ alone for salvation has been

made, then the outward symbol of baptism should be as valued and as visible as the wedding ring on a newlywed's finger.

BAPTISM IS A POWERFUL FORM OF PROCLAMATION. IT IS A "WORD IN WATER."

1. Baptism is the Christ-ordained expression in symbol of one's acceptance of the gospel. The New Testament consistently links baptism with the Good News about Jesus and a believer's repentance and faith (e.g., Acts 2:41; 8:26-38; Acts 16:31-34).
2. It is a "story in water" testifying to the believer's participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-5). It is a graphic picture of the truth it conveys. Going under water pictures Christ's death and burial. Coming out of the water illustrates his resurrection. Because we believe that immersion mode of baptism best illustrates this work of Christ, it is the mode we use at Door Creek Church. To be "in Christ" means to share spiritually in the saving acts of Jesus. The believer has died to his/her old life and has been raised with Christ to a new life under the Spirit's control (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).
3. It is a public act that gives concrete expression to the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit within a believer. The link between the use of water and the experience of cleansing from sin is a natural one. Baptism is not itself the means of cleansing—it is the outward picture of it.
4. It is a public act of initiation. Union with Christ means union with his people - participating in the fellowship of God's eternal family. Baptism doesn't make one a member of God's family; only faith in Christ does that. Like a wedding ring, it is a visible reminder of an inward commitment made in your heart.

Baptism has no contributing part in the work of salvation. Baptism is a visible testimony to one's salvation, *but not a condition for it*. A person is saved by God's grace alone working through his or her faith as a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). But it has a vital role in the discipleship experience.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

In passages such as Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48 it is evident that submission to baptism came *after* an individual's decision to trust Christ for salvation. It was an outward symbol of something that had occurred in the person's life (usually quite recently). Because of the inevitability of persecution, no one then would dream of being baptized unless they had made a decision to identify with Christ. And no one could make that decision for them.

The New Testament records the baptisms of believers, but never, specifically, of infants. In the Bible we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, blessed them and rebuked his disciples for not welcoming them. But he *did not* baptize them, and he *did not tell anyone else* to baptize them. Because of Jesus' example and because of what we believe to be the spiritual significance of baptism, we will only baptize those who have placed personal faith in Christ alone and his saving work for them.

WHY BE BAPTIZED AS AN ADULT BELIEVER WHEN I WAS BAPTIZED AS AN INFANT?

If you were baptized as a child, it was no doubt the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes and as your own expression of love and obedience to your Savior and Sovereign. It does not repudiate the rite you received as a child.

DOOR CREEK CHURCH'S PRACTICE OF PARENT-CHILD DEDICATION

Door Creek Church encourages Christian parents to present themselves and their children for the ceremony of dedication, in which God's blessing is formally invoked upon the children, and the parents publicly commit themselves to raise their children in accordance with the teachings of Scripture. The Children's Director will explain the procedure and its significance to you.