

What is Baptism?

Baptism is the outward sign and seal of a person's covenant relationship with God. It is a picture of going from death to life and of our new life in Christ. In baptism we publicly identify with Jesus' life, death and resurrection and it is the rite of passage into the community of the church.

Paul wrote in Romans 6:3-4:

“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.”

In the action of being baptized we point to the death and resurrection of Jesus and how he has saved us and given us new life in him. It is a public profession of faith in Jesus and a way we point to be part of God's people. In baptism the follower of Jesus publicly says that they believe in Jesus and that Jesus did all that was necessary for their salvation on the cross and that they believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10). Baptism is also a reminder and an expression of the believer's commitment to walk follow Jesus as a disciple (Matthew 28:18-20).

Anyone who has placed their faith and trust in the saving work of Jesus to forgive their sin and in his resurrection to give them new life should be baptized. Baptism does not save you, but is a helpful picture to the world and to other followers of Jesus of what God has done.

How do we practice baptism at West Hills?

At West Hills we baptize with water by immersion. The word for baptism in Greek, the language the New Testament was written in, means “immersed”. Immersion means to be “completely submerged in” and “surrounded by” something. The use of water is consistent with what we read in the Bible for baptism and acts as a picture of death to life and of cleansing.

Believers are baptized in “the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” as a reminder that the believer is in new covenant relationship with the trinitarian God.

Though there are various examples of location for baptisms in the New Testament we hold our baptisms on Sunday mornings following our last morning worship service for the purpose of having the baptisms be public professions of faith and not private in nature, and also to encourage the body of Christ.

No age is given in the Bible for baptism, but there is a link between profession of faith and a belief in the gospel to baptism. It is not an unbendable rule, but the Elders at West Hills recommend that a child be at least 12 years old and that they can clearly articulate the gospel in their own words without the coaching of friends or parents. We also spend time with any baptism candidate to hear about how their life was before Christ and how knowing Christ has changed them.

Should I be baptized again?

That depends. Sometimes people are tempted to get baptized again after an emotional season or experience with God. On other occasions people look back and doubt if they were really saved when they got baptized previously. We cannot answer the question of whether or not you were really saved and walking with Jesus when you first got baptized, however, if you look back and see evidence of God's saving work in your life, even if your faith was childlike or immature we would recommend that you do not get baptized again. Our pastors would love to talk with you about this further to help you discern your experience and your testimony.

Where can I learn more about baptism in the Bible?

Matthew 28:18-20

Acts 3:27-28

Acts 8:26-40

Acts 16:25-34

Romans 6:1-11

Colossians 2:11-15, 3:1-3

1 Peter 3:18-22