

Baptism: Should I be **Baptized?**

“The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.”

(From *The Statement of Faith* of the Evangelical Free Church of Lethbridge)

An Introduction to **Baptism**

We are so glad that you are looking into baptism. This booklet is meant to answer the following:

- What is the purpose of baptism?
- How does baptism happen in our church?
- Is it important to be baptized?
- Who should be baptized?
- Is it time for me to be baptized?

What is the Purpose of **Baptism**?

- 1.) It is a public confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ.
 - a. It is an outward action that proclaims an inward change of heart. We proclaim, "I am a follower of Jesus Christ and a part of God's family."
 - b. Baptism is where a person publically confesses Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, identifying him/herself with Christ and the Church.
 - c. It is for the benefit of both the person being baptized and the congregation. The church serves as an extended spiritual family and commits to encouraging and admonishing you in your faith journey.
- 2.) It connects us with the practice of the church through history.
 - a. In the Book of Matthew (28:19), Jesus' last words to His disciples were "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
 - b. Jesus Himself was baptized before He began His ministry.
 - c. This became the practice of the early church in Acts. This is now part of our practice in the New Testament Christianity.

Being baptized does NOT mean that:

- 1.) ***You become a Christian:*** Baptism does not make you a Christian. Your trust in Jesus Christ's salvation through the cross is what makes you a Christian. Baptism does not activate that faith in any way.

2.) We will stop sinning; will become a good person: We all have a sin nature that we are continuously trying to crucify with Christ. In surrendering your life to Christ, you give the Holy Spirit permission to make you look more like Jesus.

This means that we do not have to wait to figure it all out, have our lives in order, or wait to “understand it more”. We will never have it altogether, nor will we always get it right. Don’t let excuses hold you back from taking this Biblical step.

Temptations will come, the enemy will try to remove us from the path of Christ’s righteousness, but God promises never to leave us nor forsake us. Look at Romans 7:14-25. What does it say about the sin nature versus Christ’s nature in us?

Now look at the promises in Romans 8:1-17. What promises are made about the Holy Spirit?

How does E-Free **Baptize**?

There are many forms of baptism practiced by different churches. Our church practices baptism by immersion. The individual is lowered completely into and under the water and then raised up out of it. We do this because:

- 1.) The definition of the New Testament Greek word for baptism, *baptidzo*, points toward “dipping” or “submerging”
- 2.) Scripture suggests immersion as the standard form (**Matthew 3:6, 16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38**)
- 3.) Immersion best symbolizes identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (**Romans 6:3-11**).
Baptism is an acted out drama that pictures or symbolizes at least three realities of life for the person whose faith is in Jesus Christ.

I.) **Believers are dead to sin and fully alive in Jesus Christ.**

Going under the water acts out our identification with the death of Jesus, reminding us of our death to sin. Coming up out of the water identifies us with Christ’s resurrection and reminds us of our new life in Him. Baptism declares that we belong to Jesus Christ and that we are following Him.

Consider **Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:9-15**. What does it mean to be dead to sin? What does this new life in Jesus look like?

II.) **Believers join together to form a community – the church – that is Christ’s body here on earth. Read 1 Corinthians 12:13.** This takes place at the moment of faith and involves the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism outwardly imitates this inward, spiritual baptism. It publically identifies a person with other Christians saying, "Now I am one of them. Together we make up the body of Jesus Christ. I am part of this church representing Christ's body in this city."

III.) Believers are people whose sins are forgiven. In the same way that water is used to clean the dirt from our bodies, water baptism illustrates that in Christ we are cleansed from sins.

Think through **1 John 1:8-10; Titus 3:4-7**. What makes the cleansing possible? What initiates the cleansing? Who does the cleansing?

Is it Important to be **Baptized**?

The Ethiopian asked a question in **Acts 8:36**, "Look, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" His was a question of readiness: "I believe in Jesus. I have become His follower. **Why shouldn't I be baptized?**"

What are some of the barriers that might hold a follower of Jesus Christ back from being baptized?

While asking: **Why should I be baptized?** Here are three reasons to consider:

1. **Jesus was baptized.** Consider **Matthew 3:13-17**. Why was Jesus baptized?

2. **Jesus commanded His followers to be baptized.** See **Matthew 28:18-20**. This is called "The Great Commission". It was Jesus' instructions on how His disciples were to fulfill His mission. It is clear that baptizing other disciples was an essential part of this mission.

3. **The early church did what Jesus told it to do.** Read and consider **John 3:36-4:2; Acts 2:38-41; 8:12-13; 10:47-48; 16:13-15; 16:31-34.** What are the indicators that baptism was not optional in the early church?

“If you love me, keep my commands.” (John 14:15 NIV)

As we saw from Scripture, it is important to be baptized! We align ourselves with Christ’s mandate to His disciples. Because Jesus modeled baptism (and the early church followed His command and model), we too should get baptized. Baptism IDENTIFIES us with Jesus. It is one of the first steps in the discipleship journey.

Who Should be **Baptized**?

Scripture affirms that those who have believed in Jesus Christ should be baptized. Remember that baptism saves no one; we are only saved when we trust in Jesus to save us.

Examine **John 14:6; Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8-10**. What do these verses tell you about salvation and forgiveness of sins?

What do **Luke 23:42-43; 1 Corinthians 1:17** reveal about the necessity and priority of baptism in relation to the Gospel?

What pattern of salvation and baptism is illustrated in **Acts 2:38-41; 8:12; 34-39; 16:31-34**?

Questions you might have:

1.) "What if I have been baptized as an infant? Should I get baptized again?"

We will sometimes baptize an adult if the person chooses to make a formal decision on his/her own. This will in no way negate your infant baptism; this confirms your decision as an older believer in Christ. However, you do not need to be baptized again; it is possible for you to verbally share your testimony as a sort of declaration of faith.

2.) "What if I was baptized as a teenager, walked away from the faith and have returned? Do I get re-baptized?"

You do not have to get re-baptized. If it is really important to you to make a verbal declaration of your recommitment to Christ, we will help make that happen. Please talk to your small group leader or ministry staff to explore different possibilities. We would love to be a part of declaring God's relentless love at work in your life.

Is it Time for You to be **Baptized**?

Read through **Acts 8:26-39**. Jot down the sequence of events that led to the Ethiopian's baptism. What do you think is significant about the sequence? What was the "tipping point" that brought him to baptism?

Where do you think you are you in this sequence?

The examples in Scripture indicate that baptism should take place as soon after a person believes as possible. Are you a follower of Jesus Christ? Is your faith in His death and resurrection? If so, then yes, you should be baptized.

Baptisms take place at differing times throughout the year. If you would like to be baptized, speak to one of our ministry staff by contacting the church at www.efreelethbridge.ca or 403-329-3125.

What about children?

There is no minimum age for baptism given in the New Testament. As soon as children are able to understand salvation and baptism and can testify to their salvation, they become candidates for baptism. Baptism should only take place with the support and blessing of their parents. Parents should not push children into baptism before they are ready.

Preparing for Your **Baptism**

- 1.) **Complete this booklet** to the best of your ability
- 2.) Once you have finished, **contact the church office** to find out when the next baptisms are scheduled. A ministry staff member will set up a time with you to discuss your answers with you, answer any other questions you might have, and determine who will baptize you (e.g. a pastor, a small group leader, or another leader in the church).
- 3.) Arrive at least **30 minutes before** the service is to start. You will need to check in with whoever is baptizing you to be directed to the place where you will change clothes.
- 4.) Please **wear dark-coloured clothing** (e.g. females wear your bathing suit under a dark t-shirt and shorts; males wear a dark t-shirt and your bathing suit. **Bring a towel.**
- 5.) Go barefoot, wear sandals or river shoes.
- 6.) Bring a piece of paper with **your testimony** written out that you can read. Put it in a sheet protector to prevent it from getting wet.
- 7.) In addition to sharing your testimony during your baptism, you will be asked to respond affirmatively (“yes”) to the following **questions:**
 - Do you believe that Jesus was God in human flesh, that He died because of your sins and rose again cancelling your debt, making you alive together with Him?
 - Is it your confession that Jesus alone is your Lord and your Saviour?
 - Do you believe that Jesus is the head of the Church for which the Holy Spirit has gifted you for active ministry?

*If you have **any concerns** about these questions, please speak with ministry staff or your small group leader.

- 8.) You will receive a baptismal **certificate** sometime after the service.

This is a celebration! Invite all your friends and family (whether or not they are believers). Let them know that they are free to take pictures/video.

We are not done yet!

Baptism is one of the first steps in your discipleship journey. You have not “arrived” nor should this serve solely as a check-mark in your journey. We are all in process and God is growing us as believers.

We are part of a church family. Here are a few things to consider:

- 1.) **Membership:** As a follower of Jesus you belong to the “body” of Christ, His Church (Ephesians 2:11-22). Membership reveals that you acknowledge this spiritual reality and that you are choosing to align yourself with the beliefs and mandates of this particular church.
- 2.) **Growth:** We, as a church family, would love to be a part of your discipleship process. Join a Bible study, Small Group or contact the church office for more information on other growing opportunities.
- 3.) **Serve:** God has created you to do good work in His Kingdom. Spiritual gifts are given to believers BY GOD to partner with Him in building the local church. These are gifts that may or may not be clear to us and probably even to those around you. Check out 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4. These passages give examples and if you still aren’t sure what your spiritual gifts are, here are a few things you can do:
 - 1.) Ask God to make it clear.
 - 2.) Serve somewhere. You’ll figure out what is true and untrue of you.
 - 3.) Go and ask those who are close to you to help provide insight in possibilities.
 - 4.) Call up one of our ministry staff and discuss more ways to discover your gifting.

Ephesians 2:10 affirms us to do this good work in God’s Kingdom. You are never too messed up or too far gone to be used by God. Be open and God will meet you.