

# Baptism



**SEVENOAKS**  
alliance church



# Hello.

Are you considering water baptism, or are you looking for more information about baptism at Sevenoaks? If so, this material is for you.

This booklet was designed to help you understand what we believe the Scriptures to teach about baptism, and also to answer some key questions you may have prior to attending one of our regularly scheduled baptism classes. Class participants will be asked to read this material prior to attending the class, noting any questions and then asking those questions during the class.

# Table of Contents

What is baptism?	3
Who should be baptized?	4
Why should a person be baptized?	5
When should a person be baptized?	5
How should a person be baptized?	6
Summary	7
Appendix A – What baptism is not and does not do	8
Appendix B – Does a person need to be re-baptized?	9
Appendix C – Baptism & Membership	9
Appendix D – Glossary of key terms	10
Appendix E – Specifics of baptism at Sevenoaks	11

# What is baptism?

**Baptism is first and foremost a visual symbol of our relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Through baptism we are united with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection. When we go beneath the water, we are taking our place with Jesus in His death, and when we come up out of the water we are taking our place with Jesus in his resurrection. Baptism says that we have died with Jesus, that we are dead to sin, and that we have risen with Him to new life.

*“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.” (Rom. 6:3-4 all Scripture quotations in NIV)*

**Baptism is an act of dedication and commitment to Jesus.** His story now constitutes our own identity and life, meaning that our allegiance has been transferred from ourselves to Jesus Christ as Lord. We are his.

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)*

**Baptism is a public declaration** that we have chosen to be a follower of Jesus and a part of God’s family.

*“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” (Matt. 10:32)*

And lastly, **baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ.**

*“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.”” (Matt. 28:18-20) – For a definition of any term with an \* beside it, please see the section “Glossary of key terms” on page 10*

In obeying Christ’s command to be baptized, we grow to look more like our Master. God’s Spirit uses our obedience to strengthen our commitment to Christ and gives us a measure of God’s grace that spiritually nourishes and encourages us.

## Who should be baptized?

In the New Testament, baptism followed repentance\* and faith\*, therefore **anyone who has repented of their sins and has placed their faith in Jesus** ought to be baptized.

Reading through Acts, we find that baptism is explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing, and receiving the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Peter invited his listeners to *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”* (Acts 2:38). Three thousand people responded to the invitation, and *“those who accepted his message were baptized”* (Acts 2:41). When the apostles took the gospel\* across the Roman Empire from Jerusalem, new churches were planted, and believers were baptized soon after they turned away from sin and put their trust in Christ for salvation. *“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”* (Acts 8:12). *“Many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8).

Churches of the Christian & Missionary Alliance, of which Sevenoaks is one, follow the same practice of baptism subsequent to conversion to Christ. We practice what is called **believer’s baptism**, which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Those who have repented of sin and put their faith in Jesus for eternal life are encouraged to take this step of obedience. Though the Bible does not state a minimum age at which a person may be baptized, a believer should be old enough to understand the significance of baptism and to make a believable profession of faith.

## Why should a person be baptized?

**To follow Jesus' example.** He was not required to be baptized yet he chose to do so.

*"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."'" (Matt. 3:13-17)*

**To obey Jesus' command.** Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize his followers.

*"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."'" (Matt. 28:18-20)*

**To show we are his disciple.** We have the opportunity to demonstrate our trust in and love for our King through obedience in this ordinance\*. As Jesus' followers, we should have a similar response to the Ethiopian eunuch who, when he believed the gospel, proclaimed,

*"What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36)*

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to glorify God in faithful obedience. It should be our joy, and we should eagerly anticipate our participation.

## When should a person be baptized?

**A person should be baptized as soon as a person trusts Christ.** In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is rather immediate.

*"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16)*

At Sevenoaks Alliance Church we ask believers who wish to be baptized to go through a baptism class. This is not intended to unnecessarily delay but to provide more time for the baptizer to discuss the gospel and the meaning of baptism with the candidate. It also allows us time to plan a celebration service on a Sunday morning to celebrate together as a church family, and to give the person being baptized adequate time to invite friends and family to come and celebrate with them, and to hear the proclamation of the gospel.

## How should a person be baptized?

At Sevenoaks, we practice baptism by immersion, and do so for the following reasons:

1. The Greek word 'baptizo', which the Bible uses, literally means to 'plunge, submerge or immerse.' Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek *baptizo*. *Baptizo* was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.
2. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion:

*"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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 6:3-4)

3. Immersion in the baptismal waters best symbolizes the end of the old way of life. Coming up out of the baptismal waters pictures the new life found in Christ. The person who was previously dead in sin has been made spiritually alive by the same power that raised up Jesus from the grave. United with Him, the believer is released from the power of sin in order to obey God. Paul portrays this life change as putting on new clothes:

*"[F]or all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Galatians 3:27)

In cases where immersion is impossible, ie physical/health limitations or lack of water, an alternate mode is acceptable.



## Summary

Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection and become his disciple\*. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the church, oneself and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

## Appendix A - What baptism is not and does not do

**Baptism does not save, nor is it 'necessary' for salvation.** Though we receive God's grace and are more conformed to the image of Christ through the act of baptism, baptism itself cannot and does not save an individual. Without in any way diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must warn against thinking which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone.

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

**Baptism doesn't make you a better Christian.** Some wrongly believe that once they've been baptized they will be spiritually-charged to live victoriously. While it is true that you will be blessed by God's grace working in your life, it does not promise that you'll be a super-Christian. In fact, many people experience spiritual opposition on the run up to, and following, baptism. This reality however, ought not to deter us from baptism but should, in fact encourage us. Baptism is an act of pushing back the forces that are opposed to our commitment to Jesus.

**Baptism is not only for those who feel like they are 'good enough' to be baptized.**

There will never be a time when a person will be 'good enough' for baptism. Our right to enter the baptismal waters is grounded upon Christ's righteousness\*, not our own. If we have been united to Him, we should confidently draw near in obedience to His command and example. If you feel you wish to delay for this reason, for fear, or for any other reason, please talk to one of your pastors.

## **Appendix B - Does a person need to be re-baptized?**

For those who were sprinkled or immersed at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with, or immersion in water before being born again and trusting Christ, your experience was not believer's baptism, and thus you should be re-baptized. The question is therefore, "Was I truly trusting in Christ when I was baptized?"

There should always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the life of those who have trusted in the gospel. Believers must not be re-baptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification\*. However, if you believe that your original baptism experience occurred prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Saviour, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

Those who were baptized as believers before affiliating with an Alliance church do not need to be re-baptized.

## **Appendix C - Baptism & Membership**

Believer's baptism is a requirement for membership at Sevenoaks Alliance Church. We require anyone wishing to join the church to have displayed obedience to Christ's command following conversion. While we practice baptism by immersion at Sevenoaks, we do not require the mode of immersion for membership. If a person was sprinkled or immersed after conversion, he or she has met this requirement for membership.

## Appendix D - Glossary of key terms

**Gospel** – The glorious news announced of salvation and victory over sin and death that God offers to all people through the person and accomplished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as proven by his resurrection.

*“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve... this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.” (1 Cor. 15:3-5,11b)*

**Disciple** – A follower of Jesus who loves Jesus with all his/her heart, and who is learning to think and act like Jesus. ‘Disciple’ and ‘Christian’ are synonymous in Scripture, with followers of Jesus most commonly referred to as disciples. If you are a Christian, you are a disciple...it is not a category of super-spiritual believers.

**Repentance** – A heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to leave it behind and walk in obedience to Christ. Some explain repentance as doing a 180 degree turn - away from sin, towards Jesus.

**Faith** – Deep trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we can take him at his word and believe what he has said.

**Christ’s righteousness** – Jesus’ perfect moral record.

**Ordinance** – A ceremony or rite that the church observes as a sign of God’s grace, and a means by which grace is received. The two ordinances that our tradition observes are baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

**Sanctification** – A progressive work (of God and us) that makes us more and more free from sin, and more like Jesus.

## Appendix E - Specifics of baptism at Sevenoaks

### *Prior to the Baptism*

1. We ask those wishing to be baptized to participate in a baptism class (offered several times each year) in which we explain the gospel and our theology of baptism.
2. The candidate will be asked to prepare a two to three minute testimony (roughly one page typed) to share to the congregation prior to being baptized. It is helpful to keep these two questions in mind while preparing what to say: ***“What has Jesus done for me?” And “What difference has Jesus made in my life?”***
3. The candidate must meet with and have final approval from a full-time member of the pastoral staff. This meeting will be scheduled a week or so after attendance at a class. This meeting will also include sharing your testimony with the pastor.

### *Baptism Service*

1. We have frequent celebration services in which the church celebrates baptisms together. We encourage those wishing to be baptized to do so within the context of these gatherings, with exceptions where necessary.
2. Participants are asked to personally share their testimonies, if possible, or to have the person baptizing them to share for them.
3. After the testimony, the person performing the baptism will ask, “Do you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord?” To which the person being baptized will respond, “Yes” or “I do.”
4. The baptizer will then say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,” will then immerse, and will subsequently raise the person out of the water.

### ***Helpful Hints***

1. Wear dark shorts and a dark shirt to maintain modesty.
2. Bring a change of clothes, towel and bag to hold your wet clothes after you change.
3. Arrive 30 minutes prior to the service in which you are being baptized. You will receive an email or phone call the week before with further details on when and where to arrive.