

water baptism

- our theology and practice as Dryden Full Gospel Church -

belong

grow

engage

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at a glance

Water Baptism is intended for individuals who has put their faith in Jesus Christ and received salvation by believing in Christ's atoning work on the cross for our redemption, thus becoming His disciple. In obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, our church family, oneself and the world, a believer should be baptized by immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who commissioned us to go into all the world baptizing in the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Jesus commands us to be baptized as a visual and symbolic demonstration of our union with him in His death and resurrection. It signifies that our old way of life has been put to death and buried, and that we have been raised and invited to walk in a newness of life: no longer slaves to sin, but living in faithful obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Theology

what is baptism?

Baptism and communion (or the Lord's Supper) are the two sacred ordinances (sometimes called sacraments) which we practice at Dryden Full Gospel Church. We believe that Jesus has invited us to be baptized and to eat the Lord's Supper together as a church; they're ways for us to get in on and give attention to the work of God in our lives and in our world. We participate, act out, or embody in physical reality what is happening spiritually in our lives.

In baptism and communion we remember Jesus' life, death and resurrection on our behalf, how he cleansed us from sins and purified us, reconciling us unto God. As we enter into the baptism waters the Bible says that we are united in Christ's death; as we are raised out of the waters we are united with Christ's resurrection. Baptism symbolizes the way in which we have died to an old life of sin and desire to walk faithfully as Jesus' disciples.

What a person believes about baptism affects the way in which they practice and perform the ordinance. As we reflect on baptism and what it means for our lives, we will answer the following questions:

- Who should be baptized?
- When should they be baptized?
- How should they be baptized?

As a symbol, baptism illustrates reality: it gives us a picture, a living metaphor, by which we can understand more fully what is happening in the spirit. In baptism we see:

1. Christ's death and resurrection → (going down into the water and coming out again).
2. The disciple's union with Christ → (by following his example in the waters).
3. Entering into a newness of life → (walking out of the baptismal waters).
4. Physical washing of the entire person → (a cleansing away of sin).

merely a symbol?

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Church fiercely debated the nature of baptism, communion and other practices of the church commonly called sacraments or ordinances. The Reformation occurred during this period: it was an attempt by some Christian thinkers to bring some careful correction to the current thoughts and ideas of the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestant church emerged from this movement. It was a time where differing views of thought and interpretation broke off into their own denominations. When it comes to baptism we do not desire to be judgmental in the matter. Nevertheless, it is important to keep a few important and helpful truths about the nature of baptism itself in mind:

1. BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE

Baptism itself does not confer forgiveness of your sins—this is only done through personal repentance, confession and acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Baptism is a step of obedience in desiring to be made more and more into the image of Christ.¹ While we do understand that in a mysterious way, God’s Spirit and grace are at work in a person when they participate in baptism, we believe this is a saving grace not a sanctifying grace: it is an empowering and equipping of the believer to walk in newness of life, not the forgiveness of sins.

2. BAPTISM IS NOT NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

Without in any way diminishing the work of God in baptism, nor the duty or delight that a believer experiences, we must also warn against the idea that salvation is dependent upon baptism. Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus.²

why should I be baptized?

MATTHEW 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

ACTS 2:37–41 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?” ³⁸And 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. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far

¹ Though 1 Peter 3 states, “baptism...saves you,” it is important to note the context and particularly Peter’s immediate clarification that it is not the physical washing of water itself but the appeal or pledge to call upon God which saves us. This is very similar to passages like Romans 10:13, which states that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Baptism is a symbol of this faith in Christ which alone is what saves us.

² In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus states that unless one is “born of water and the Spirit” he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Many people might interpret this thinking that Jesus is referring specifically to water baptism, however nothing in the context suggests that this is what Jesus has in mind. Rather he is appealing to Ezekiel 36 where a New Covenant is described as being about “water” and “Spirit”. The point is that “new birth” comes from God and is what saves us.

off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACTS 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

From these texts we see that baptism is a part of a living in faithful obedience to Jesus. Repentance comes first: this is when we are ‘born again’ by asking the Lord for forgiveness and we begin a new relationship with God by trusting Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, inviting him to live in our hearts and be at work in our lives, cleansing us from sin. Baptism is closely paired with salvation. It is a way in which we identify ourselves as a part of the family of God and are joined in Christ’s death and resurrection so that we may walk in newness of life.

So, yes, we are baptized in order to obey Christ’s command that we do so. However, baptism is not meant to be a mere duty, something we do grudgingly or without joy. Baptism is meant to be evidence that a person is a disciple of Christ; it is something we should anticipate and desire.

That said, baptism can come with a cost. In many cultures being baptized opens oneself to public persecution. Though this may not happen in Canada, one might face misunderstanding and ridicule from family or friends.

The ultimate reason for being baptized is to follow Christ joyfully and to give God glory for the new life he has begun in you. Any other motivation (wanting to join a particular local congregation, trying to please a friend or family member) are simply wrong reasons for seeking baptism.

who should be baptized?

At Dryden Full Gospel, we believe that baptism is intended only for the individual who has received Christ’s salvation by believing in his atoning work and becoming His disciple.

We practice what is called “believer’s” or “confessor’s” baptism, which means we only baptize those who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through Acts, we find

baptism explicitly related to repentance, receiving the Word, believing and receiving the Holy Spirit, There is no explicit evidence to suggest that nonbelievers were baptized.

ACTS 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACTS 8:12 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.

GALATIANS 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

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.

what about rebaptism?

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 baptism, and thus you need to be 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 need not be rebaptized each time they experience greater joy and sanctification. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

when should a person be baptized?

ACTS 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

ACTS 8:34-38 ³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the

eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ^[37] **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

In the Scriptures we often see people coming to faith in Jesus and being baptized rather immediately or soon after. We don't see any examples of delayed baptism in which a believer refrains from the ordinance. Unless there are convincing reasons to wait, a believer should seek baptism as soon as possible after coming to faith in the Lord.

improper reasons for delaying baptism

1. MISUNDERSTANDING

If you happened to grow up in a faith tradition which practiced baptism in another way, you may be initially confused by what we mean by 'believer's baptism'. That's the reason why we want to take the time to make sure you understand our theological position at Dryden Full Gospel and have a clear understanding of what the ordinance is and is not.

2. FEAR

For some of us anxiety can be a very real factor in delaying baptism. We are not going to force you to become baptized. This is a decision in following the Lord which you must make. However, we must also recognize that fear can be sinful, and that Lord has promised to give us his courage and ability to overcome sin. If you are afraid of what other's may think of you, or are concerned about public ridicule or persecution, then please don't stay isolated in your concerns, but seek guidance and assurance from a pastor, elder or good friend. Jesus promised that we would face persecution, but he also promised to be with us and never forsake us in the midst of hardship.⁴ Our fears can be calmed and quenched in the love of Christ, and baptism itself can be an excellent step of obedience to Christ's command.

3. NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH

None of us will ever be "good enough" for baptism. That is not the point. Our decision and ability to follow Jesus by entering the baptism waters is based on *his* righteousness, not on anything we accomplish by our own right.

³ Some manuscripts include here: *[Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]*

⁴ John 16:33; Heb 13:5.

how should a person be baptized?

Though other denominations and theological traditions may baptize by sprinkling or pouring water upon the individual, Dryden Full Gospel practices baptism by full immersion. We do this in light of the following:

1. **The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.**

Our English word, 'baptism', is a transliteration of the Greek word 'baptizo'. Baptizo in Greek literature described an act of immersing something in water or other liquid. This act of submersion has a transformative effect.

2. **The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion.**

Burial means being covered over by something. Resurrection is the act of coming up and out of this something—a grave or tomb. Baptism by full immersion best conveys this reality by actually placing a believer down into water and pulling them out again.

Biblically speaking waters are often associated with chaos or God's judgment. Noah's flood (Genesis 6-7) and the destruction of Egypt at the Red Sea crossing (Exodus 15) involve both God's saving grace for his people as well as a purging of wickedness and sin. Both grace and judgment are a part of God's redemptive plan for the salvation of our world.

Staying underwater will kill you! There is vulnerability, a surrendering of control, a trusting in the Lord that I am fundamentally transformed by following him and committing my life to him. There is a mystery here that we are called to enter into.

COLOSSIANS 2:12 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.

ROMANS 6:3-4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.

3. Furthermore, the surrounding context of the following biblical passages suggests baptism by full immersion.

MATTHEW 3:16 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...

MARK 1:5, 10 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins...And when **he came up out of the water**, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

JOHN 3:23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, **because water was plentiful there**, and people were coming and being baptized...

ACTS 8:38–39 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.

where should a person be baptized?

Biblically there really are no specific limitations on the location; however we prefer to practice the ordinance within the context of the local church family in order to allow the congregation to celebrate as the redeemed community with the person's act of obedience.

That said, we are also well aware that locations itself should really not hinder someone from being baptized. It does not need to be in a church service on a Sunday. For instance, baptisms in rivers or lakes can be quite beautiful, though such aesthetic details really should not hold weight in determining the when and where of a person's baptism, for they are acting in obedience to the Lord.

who can perform a baptism?

The Bible gives no such prescriptions on who can baptize a believer. The single requirement for the one performing the baptism appears to be that they themselves are a committed disciple of Christ, and have ideally been baptized themselves. Typically one of our pastors performs the ordinance, and often this is often the same person with whom you will be meeting ahead of time to discuss the nature of baptism and to attend a baptism class. If someone other than the

Lead Pastor is going to perform the baptism, it is important to communicate that with the Lead Pastor and Elders.

Our Praxis

the road to water baptism

At our church we ask for believers who are wishing to be baptized to delay for a brief season so that they can go through a baptism class and come to a sound understanding of what the ordinance is all about.

- First, this period of time and class allows us to discuss the gospel message, baptism and relate our theological convictions and practices regarding both.
- Second, this allows us to announce the upcoming baptism celebration to the congregation, giving others who have never been baptized to consider it afresh.
- Third, it allows us to prepare for a community celebration as a church family—we want to encourage and stand with you as you take this important step.
- Fourth, this allows you time to invite friends and family to share in this day with you.

prior to baptism

We ask that those wishing to be baptized should inform a Pastor and participate in a *baptism class* at which we explain the gospel, our core Christian beliefs and theological position on certain areas pertaining to the ordinance.

After taking the class, we ask for participants to submit a testimony of conversion in which the Pastors and/or Eldership will ensure that the participant understand the gospel and is indeed a born-again Christian. **We do not, for instance, want a participant to believe that they are a Christian from birth, or misunderstand salvation as simply one's moral improvement. Participants need to be disciples of Christ: living in personal relationship with Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and having accepted his redemptive work on the Cross for forgiveness of sins.**

baptism service

During the service the participants will be invited to share their personal testimonies of how they came to faith in the Lord. See the attached sheet on how to prepare a testimony. These can be spoken without notes, or the person may feel free to write out what they would like to share and read it aloud. The testimony need only be a few minutes.

After the testimony, the participant and the person performing the baptism will step into the baptismal waters and the baptizer will ask something along the lines of, "Do you confess and believe Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour" to which the baptizee will respond, "Yes" or "I do."

The Pastor (or person doing the baptizing) will then say, "Upon the confession of your faith, I now baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Some may choose to additionally say, "who commanded us to go into all the world and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." or "Buried with Christ in baptism, raised to walk in newness of life" (which is taken from Romans 6:4, '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.')

You will then be let down and immersed in the water and raised up and out again!

things to remember

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. When standing in the waters, cross your hands over your chest. You can use one hand to plug your nose if you desire. The pastor will place one hand over your hands and another on your back
4. Bend your knees slightly as you are laid back into the water and straighten your knees as you are pulled out again.
5. This is a very special time. Don't feel you have to rush it! Take a moment to worship the Lord and be sensitive to Him as you follow him in baptism.

preparing a testimony

Sometime before your baptism, we will likely ask you share your testimony. Your testimony is the story of how you entered into relationship with the Lord. It is really helpful for you to explore and remember how God has moved in your life by taking time to reflect on and even write down your faith journey. Through our life stories, our testimonies, God encourages others, and we have the opportunity to introduce Jesus in a clear, simple and real way to those with whom we share.

A carefully and intelligently worded three-minute testimony will communicate far more effectively than a prolonged one. A lot of extra material will only detract from, not emphasize your experiences and relationship with God. Focus on the point of personal commitment to Christ and what He has done in your life.

how to prepare

Before beginning, ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you prepare (James 1:5-6).

Consider a three-point outline:

1. Life before knowing Christ.
2. How you came to know Christ. Try and be specific: did someone pray with you? Where did you first hear about Jesus? Etc.
3. Life after you received Christ. And why you are choosing to be baptized today. Focus on how He has changed your life and what he means to you. If you become a Christian as a small child, it may help to emphasize this point.

Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. If possible include relevant, thought provoking personal experiences or particular people who played an important role in leading you to relationship with the Jesus. Remember that less is often more. Consider including a Scripture verse or passage which has been significant in your life. Pray for the Lord to help you reflect and prepare and then use the outline above to prepare your testimony.

areas to avoid

- Do not include statements that reflect negatively on the Church, other organizations or people. This time isn't about pointing fingers or rousing old hurts or wounds, it's about giving God glory for Christ's forgiveness, and his salvation work within you.

- Avoid mentioning denominations, especially in a derogatory way. Again, the purpose is to exalt the Lord for what He has done.
- Avoid preaching at people. This is a testimony, not a "preachimony."
- You will likely want to avoid stereotypes or speaking in generalities that may not make sense to others. Words that are meaningless to non-Christians: "salvation," "saved," "born again," and "conversion," need to be defined if used.

keep in mind

1. Remember, the same Christ lives in you whether you trusted Him early or later in life. Do not be concerned that your testimony be exciting, just that it be real and interesting.
2. Be realistic. Do not infer that Christ eliminates all the problems of life, but rather that He enables you to live them out with peace and confidence. "I am with you always." You don't need to over-exaggerate to make your testimony 'sound better'.
3. Be positive, not negative, from start to finish.
4. You are surrounded by a family who supports and loves you. We are here to celebrate with you!
5. You can prepare and speak without notes; or simply read what you have written. Speaking naturally without reading is much more engaging (and easier than it can seem!). If you choose to read notes, remember to look up as you read and make eye contact with the audience. We actually do want to hear your story, in your words, and give God the glory for all he has done!
6. Breathe. It will be alright!