



BAPTISM PRIMER

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a means of grace¹, given to us by Christ², by which we are welcomed into the family of God and the fellowship of the church.

WHAT DOES BAPTISM DO?

1. Baptism signs and seals us as belonging to Christ.

Colossians 2: "In Christ also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 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."

"(Baptism) is an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in turn testify our piety towards him, both before himself and before angels as well as men." - Institutes

2. Baptism affirms and strengthens our faith.

"I really am cleansed from my sin."

¹ Peter 3: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."

"The first object for which baptism is appointed by the Lord is to be a sign and evidence of our purification, or a sealed instrument by which he assures us that all our sins are so deleted, covered, and effaced, that they will never come into his sight, never be mentioned, never be imputed." - Institutes

“I really am dead to my old life and the curse that was on it and alive to a new one.”

Romans 6: “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.”

“Another benefit of baptism is, that it shows us our mortification in Christ and new life in him.” - Institutes

“I really am united to Christ.”

Matthew 3: “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

“The last advantage which our faith receives from baptism is its assuring us not only that we are ingrafted into the death and life of Christ, but so united to Christ himself as to be partakers of all his blessings. For he consecrated and sanctified baptism in his own body, that he might have it in common with us as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which he deigned to form with us.” - Institutes

3. Baptism declares our faith to the world

“I really do confess, love and obey Jesus.”

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

“Baptism serves as our confession before men, inasmuch as it is a mark by which we openly declare that we wish to be ranked among the people of God, by which we testify that we concur with all Christians in the worship of one God, by which, in short, we publicly assert our faith, so that not only do our hearts breathe, but our tongues also, and all the members of our body, in every way they can, proclaim the praise of God.” – Institutes

WHAT DOES BAPTISM NOT DO?

1. Baptism does not save.

While the sacraments are means of God’s grace to us, it is not “saving” grace. Our salvation is tied not to any work of ours, but to the work of Christ for us, apprehended by faith.

2. Baptism is not “necessary” for salvation.

While everyone who believes the gospel should be baptized by the officers of Jesus' church into the fellowship of the church, salvation does not hinge on whether or not we've been baptized.

WHAT IS THE PROPER CONTEXT FOR BAPTISM?

The sacraments belong to the church, so baptism is meant to be administered under the authority of qualified officers of the church.

WHAT IS THE PROPER TIMING OF BAPTISM?

When baptism should be administered has been debated for a long time by Jesus-loving saints.

Here at Seven Mile Road, we practice "credo-baptism." This means that we believe that baptism is best administered when someone has professed faith in Christ and when solid evidences of that faith (understanding of the gospel, sorrow for and repentance of sin, affections for Christ, hunger for truth, counting of the cost, love for the church, etc.) are present in their life. In other words, we baptize someone when they make a credible profession of faith.

WHAT IS THE PROPER MODE OF BAPTISM?

How baptism should be administered has also been debated for a long time by Jesus-loving saints.

Here at Seven Mile Road, we opt for immersion. For us, this mode best communicates some of the most crucial realities of baptism, like our union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

WHAT ABOUT OUR CHILDREN?

At what age to baptize sons and daughters who have been raised in the life of the church has also been debated for a long time by Jesus-loving saints.

We believe that one of the ways that God works is through households, intending for his gospel grace to run downstream for generations to those who love and fear Him. We raise our children in hope that His grace will take root in their souls as we prayerfully surround them with love, instruction, and discipline at home and in church.

While everyone's gospel story is unique, many of our children will come to love and trust Christ while still under our care. Although we have no specific minimum age requirement for baptism, we do wait until our children are of a certain maturity before welcoming them into the waters of baptism. Ordinarily,

this wouldn't be until after their completion of our three-year gospel formation (catechism) class that begins in 4th grade. This is not meant to confuse or discourage our littlest ones from loving and obeying Jesus with us at a very young age! Rather, it is meant to love them by ensuring that their baptism is anchored in a faith that is understood and owned by them and evidenced in their lives.

PATHWAY TO BAPTISM

If you've believed the gospel and are ready to be baptized, here are the steps to take:

1. Read our Baptism Primer.
2. Complete our simple online Baptism Questionnaire: bit.ly/2MNI3Dq
3. Meet with one of our pastors to be examined for your readiness for baptism.
4. Prepare a public profession of faith to be read/spoken before the church.
5. Step into the waters of baptism on a Sunday morning!

FAQs

Do I have to become a member of Seven Mile Road in order to be baptized?

Yes, of course! As baptism marks entrance into family of God and the fellowship of the church, once you are baptized you come under the care of our pastors, are welcome to The Lord's Table, and are expected to finalize the covenanting process for membership with us.

Do younger baptizees become members?

When a son or daughter of the church is baptized before reaching the age of majority, we don't immediately place on them all the responsibilities of church membership, but we do welcome them to The Lord's Table and to growing into fully communicant membership with us over time.

If I have already been baptized as an infant, do I have to be baptized again?

No. If you received a Trinitarian baptism as an infant in a church context where paedobaptism was practiced, we do not require "rebaptism" for membership at Seven Mile Road.

¹ This is why baptism is called a "sacrament."

² This is why baptism is called an "ordinance."