

## What does the Bible say about Baptism?



Before he left this world Jesus said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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." (Matthew 28:18-20).

From this we see that Christians are commanded to:

1. Make disciples or followers of Jesus and baptise them.
2. Teach them to obey everything that Jesus commanded the first disciples.

In the Bible baptism is a sign. Just as water washes away dirt, the water used in a baptism reminds us that the death of Jesus on the cross washes away the sin of those people who put their faith in him.

Baptism then is a visible and outward sign that a person has turned away from sin and wants to be forgiven by God and live a new life trusting in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (Acts 22:16). Baptism is a sign that points to the beginning of a new relationship with God.

The inner reality of baptism is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This occurs when God chooses to wash and renew a person's heart from within (Titus 3:5). No human ritual can make this happen, this is God's work and happens at his timing (Acts 10:44-48).

## Who can be Baptised?

In the Presbyterian Church two groups of people are baptised:

**Adults and young adults** who become Christians by trusting in Jesus.

**Infants** whose parents are Christians.

## Why are Infants Baptised?

It might be helpful to first explain what infant baptism isn't:

- It is not a "naming ceremony".
- It's not a "christening" – it doesn't make a child a Christian.
- It is not something magical that brings good luck to a child.

Children who are not baptised are not at any disadvantage in life.

- It is not necessary to be baptised to go to heaven.

If these are not the reasons for baptising children, then *why are children baptised?*

In the Bible we find that the promise of forgiveness that baptism symbolises, is for everyone who trusts in Jesus, including their children.



Peter replied, "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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

In the New Testament there are instances where whole families are baptised. (Acts 16:15,33; 1 Corinthians 1:16). This is because baptism is also a sign of belonging to God's people. (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4-6).

Baptising a child (or anyone for that matter), does not make them a Christian, but it is a sign that this child is part of God's family. This is why a baptism is usually done in the context of a regular Sunday church service.

## Can I have an Infant Dedication?

Some people would prefer that their child be baptised upon profession of their own faith when the child is older. In this case we encourage parents to participate in a dedication of their child so we can give thanks to God for their child's birth and pray for them as a church family together.

As with a baptism, a dedication is a witness to the fact that the parents personally love the Lord and want their child to grow up in the Christian faith so that they too will come to love and trust the Lord when they are older.