



**WOODMEN VALLEY**  
**CHAPEL**

# ***BELIEVER'S BAPTISM***

**WVC "Statement of Faith" – BAPTISM**

***Baptism is a public display of a believer's commitment to Christ. Baptism does not make a person a Christian but is symbolic of death to sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ. Baptism is by immersion and is done after a person decides to follow Jesus Christ.***

***(Matt. 3:13-17; 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12)***

## INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this booklet, you are likely either considering baptism or you have already made that decision to be baptized and you just want some additional information. In either case, we are so thankful for your interest. Whether you know a lot about baptism or very little, it is our hope and prayer that you will learn more about this wonderful Christian ordinance, and be better prepared for your baptism if and when that time comes.

## **WHAT IS BAPTISM?**

Baptism is one of two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as a *visible* symbol of *invisible* grace. (The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper, commonly known as communion.) These are the discernible and tangible representations of both the invisible realities of the gospel and the Spirit's application of this gospel to our lives. In both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as it is revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As the candidate for baptism enters into the water, we are reminded that our Lord was crucified for our sins and buried—and we, too, have died to our sin as we go under the water of baptism. As Jesus was raised from the dead, thus defeating death, coming up out of the waters of baptism celebrates the new life we experience as we are raised anew in 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.*

Who should be baptized? When should they be baptized? How should they be baptized? All of these questions are answered as we reflect upon what baptism means. In short, it is an *outward* expression of an *inward* transformation.

In our "Statement of Faith" as a church, it describes baptism as "...**a public display of a believer's commitment to Christ. Baptism does not make a person a Christian but is *symbolic* of death to sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ.**"

As a "public display" and "symbol", then, baptism *illustrates* a number of significant realities:

1. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection
2. The believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection
3. The new life in Christ in which a believer walks
4. The cleansing and washing away of sin that has occurred for the believer

That being said, it is important to keep in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism does not do, and also what baptism is not:

**BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE.** If one enters the waters of baptism as an unbeliever, they exit the water the same way. While grace is in some way mysteriously mediated through the ordinance of baptism, it is not *saving* grace. This saving grace comes only through faith in Jesus, not through a religious symbol such as baptism.

**BAPTISM IS NOT ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION.** Without diminishing the importance of baptism in a believer's walk, it is to be noted that our salvation is not dependent on being baptized. The gospel is one of salvation by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*.

### WHY SHOULD SOMEONE BE BAPTIZED?

Someone may say, *"I believe in Jesus. Isn't that enough?"* Consider the following reasons for following the Lord in baptism as a believer in Christ:

TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY JESUS HIMSELF:

**Mark 1:9-10** – *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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. (See also Matthew 3:13-17.)*

BECAUSE CHRIST COMMANDED IT:

**Matthew 28:18-20** – *And Jesus came and said to them, "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."*

BECAUSE THE EARLY CHURCH PRACTICED IT:

**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.*

SO...WHAT ABOUT YOU?

**Acts 22:16** – *"And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized...calling on His name."*

So why be baptized?

1. To follow Christ's example.
2. To obey His command.
3. To follow the example of the early church.
4. To provide evidence that you are a true follower of Christ.

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. Through our baptism we have an opportunity to display our trust in and love for our Savior through obedience in this ordinance. If we think of baptism as a mere burden or obligation, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in His call to be baptized!

The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a heartfelt desire to glorify God in faithful obedience. Any other motivation (e.g., to please a family member, because a friend is doing it, simply to join the church, etc.) should not be the ultimate reason for seeking to be baptized.

### WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Our "Statement of Faith" identifies who should be considered a candidate for baptism:

*"Baptism is a public display of a **believer's** commitment to Christ."*

Therefore, we practice what is called “**believer’s baptism**”. This means we only baptize someone who believes in and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Reading through the New Testament Book of Acts, baptism is explicitly linked with repentance, receiving the Word of God as truth, believing in Christ’s finished work on the cross, and receiving the Holy Spirit:

**Acts 2:41 – The Believers on the Day of Pentecost:**

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

**Acts 8:12 – The Believers in Samaria:**

*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.*

**Acts 16:30-34 – The Believers in the Philippian Jailer’s Household:**

*Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*

**WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM?**

In some churches and faith traditions, newborn babies are baptized, which is generally performed by sprinkling a small amount of water on their head. While there are differing positions and doctrines concerning this view of baptism, Woodmen Valley Chapel does not practice infant baptisms. Instead, we “dedicate” babies and toddlers to the Lord. Naturally, a baby is unable to know what baptism is all about, nor is it able to express personal faith in Christ. When parents have their infant baptized, it is *their* choice, not the infant’s. However, it is their hope that the child will grow up to believe in, and follow, Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

You may have been baptized when you were an infant. If so, you can now make your own choice to be baptized as a believer in Christ.

**SHOULD A PERSON BE “RE-BAPTIZED”?**

For those who were baptized as a believer in Christ at a young age, regardless of the form used (i.e., sprinkling with water, pouring of water, or full immersion in water), it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not be repeated. However, if that baptism occurred before you placed your faith in the person and work of Christ, your experience was not truly “believer’s baptism”, as it was *before* you were “born again”. The question you therefore need to answer is this: “*Did I have a personal faith in Christ when I was baptized?*” If you know that your original baptism experience was before you truly believed and trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior, we believe you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized as a believer, today!

## WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

In all accounts in the Scriptures, “believer’s baptism” is performed almost immediately upon their confession of faith in Christ:

**Acts 22:16** – *“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized...calling on His name.”*

This pattern of near immediate baptism should be followed, then, unless there are compelling reasons to delay it. As soon as a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a regenerate believer refrains from obedience to the ordinance of baptism.

### **MOTIVATIONS FOR DELAYING BAPTISM:**

#### **1. FEAR:**

One of the most common reasons for delaying is fear. But such emotional anxiety should not hinder our obedience. A person’s obedience in the area of baptism is an excellent way to begin the process of sanctification and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in your life.

#### **2. NOT FEELING “GOOD ENOUGH”:**

Many delay baptism because they don’t feel they are “good enough”. But there will never be a time when a person will be “good enough” to be baptized. In fact, our right to enter the waters of baptism is grounded upon Christ’s righteousness—not ours! If we have been united with Him by grace through faith, we can confidently draw near to Christ in obedience to His command and example of baptism.

### **THE PRACTICE OF WOODMEN VALLEY CHAPEL:**

At our church, we ask believers who wish to be baptized to be scheduled for the next baptism weekend, if at all possible (these are scheduled at least quarterly). We encourage baptism candidates to prepare themselves for baptism in the weeks leading up to our quarterly baptisms. For elementary-age children, we encourage them to attend a class to confirm their belief in and understanding of Jesus Christ. These classes, called Christianity 101, are offered twice each year, and parents are required to attend with their child.

## HOW SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED?

Though other denominations and faith traditions baptize by sprinkling or pouring of water, Woodmen Valley Chapel practices baptism by immersion. (However, we do not require baptism by immersion as a requirement for membership; we will accept all forms of baptism, provided it was done as a believer in Christ.)

We follow the practice of baptism by immersion in light of the following considerations:

**1. The Greek word for “baptism” (*baptizo*) literally means to *immerse, dip, or plunge*.**

Our English word “baptism” is a transliteration of the Greek word, *baptizo*. It was commonly used in Greek literature and culture to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. (For example, in the garment industry, to dye a piece of cloth required one to *baptizo* the cloth completely into the colored solution to ensure the entire cloth was dyed the desired color.) When translators were initially faced with what word to use for “*baptizo*”, they simply created an English version with the same phonetic sound and rendered it “baptize” or “baptism”.

## 2. The representation of union in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection is best expressed through immersion.

The symbolism of being united with Christ in His burial (being placed in a grave or tomb) and resurrection (coming up out of a grave or tomb) is wonderfully expressed by going down ~~into~~ and under the water, and coming up out of the water again.

Note the following Scripture which presents this symbolism for us:

**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.*

## 3. The surrounding context of baptism in the Scriptures suggests baptism by 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...*

**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?

People have been baptized in oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, swimming pools, and even hot tubs. Baptisms can take place *anywhere* there is water deep enough to immerse the baptism candidate.

Although there are no specific directions in the Scriptures as to the location for baptisms to take place, we prefer to practice this ordinance within the context of the local church and the weekend worship service. This allows our congregation to join in the celebration as witnesses to the person’s act of obedience and submission to the Lord’s command to be baptized, and to allow the baptism candidate to *publicly* declare their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## HOW SHOULD A PERSON PREPARE FOR BAPTISM?

First of all, be certain of your own faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Second, be certain of the reasons you are following the Lord in baptism. Ensure that it is the deep conviction of your heart to be baptized as an act of obedience and submission to the Lord's command.

If you are ready to move forward, then we ask all our baptism candidates to prepare a written testimony. This is simply a written confession of your faith in Jesus Christ. You'll find an outline on our church website: [www.woodmenvalley.org/baptism](http://www.woodmenvalley.org/baptism).

Simply complete and submit this form to the church office. Once received, the church staff will begin working with you to answer any questions you might have, schedule your baptism, and provide all you will need to be prepared for your special day!

On that web page you will see the following box to help you create your personal testimony:

### My Story

In a total of one hundred words or less, please respond to the following statements to write your testimony:

*My life before Jesus...*

*How Jesus came into my life...*

*The difference Jesus has made in my life...*

*I wish to be baptized because...*

Once completed, your testimony will be placed on our web site for others to view and rejoice with you over the transforming work of the gospel of Jesus Christ in your life. Your testimony will also be included on the "Baptism Certificate" you will receive after your baptism.

Should you need further assistance with any aspect of your baptism, just contact the Church Office at **719.388-5000**. Our staff would love to help you in any way we can.