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# BAPTISM

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**FELLOWSHIP**  
MISSIONARY CHURCH

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# CONGRATULATIONS!

As your pastor, I want you to know that we are so proud of your decision to be baptized.

At Fellowship we believe the decision to get baptized is an important one and absolutely the right “next step” as you become a disciple that looks more and more like Jesus Himself.

We believe that God did not mean for us to do this journey of faith alone. That’s why we want to meet individually with you as you prepare for baptism.

If you haven’t done so already, please visit [fmc.church/baptism](http://fmc.church/baptism) to find out when the next baptism will take place and to set up a baptism interview. If you need help or are unable to access the Internet, just call the church office at 260-447-3578.

Prior to your baptism interview take some time to read through the material found in this booklet. Bring this booklet with you and pay special attention to the reflection questions, as your interviewer will want to discuss them with you. We’ve allowed you space to write out your responses to those questions and provided a place to make note of questions you may have for your interviewer.

Following Jesus through baptism is a spiritually powerful experience. We look forward sharing it with you!



Joe Johns  
*Senior Pastor*



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## AN ANALOGY OF BAPTISM

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Imagine a wedding. The bride and groom stand side-by-side in the front of the church. They take turns promising “till death do us part.” These two young lovers don’t look any different on the outside, but in just a few moments they will be married--united for life by invisible cords. Signifying that unseen union, the bride and groom exchange rings. These bands of gold tell the world they are now married. They identify the couple as husband and wife.

Imagine that an unmarried couple is watching. They decide that they want to get married, too. So they give each other rings. No commitment, no vows are made, just the symbols of union. As they walk out of church right behind the last groomsman, their hands, like those of the bride and groom, bear the accepted token of lifetime love. But only the couple that has made the commitment to each other is really married.

There is a great difference between symbols and substance. The mere exchange of rings does not marry the couple. Marriage is based on commitment, not on bands of gold. The same is true of becoming a Christian and being baptized. Embracing Christ as Savior is the point of commitment. Baptism, like the wedding ring, is an outward sign of the commitment. Without it, baptism is devoid of meaning. With it, baptism becomes a beautiful public dedication of love and commitment to discipleship.

Of course, the real significance of baptism cannot be defined merely with the analogy of a wedding. At Fellowship Missionary Church, the Scriptures are the source of our beliefs. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commands His followers to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is the means by which followers of Christ are identified as His disciple.

In passages such as Acts 2:41, 8:12 and 10:47-48, it is evident that baptism follows an individual’s decision to trust Christ alone for salvation. The New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only. Baptism was never intended to provide salvation for an individual, but rather to publicly identify a person as a disciple of Christ.

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## FMC'S STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

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While recognizing the right of other churches to practice baptism as it conforms to their theologies, the leadership of Fellowship Missionary Church understands the Scripture to teach that only professing believers qualify for baptism. Scriptural teaching on baptism may be summarized as follows:

- Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who want to be his disciples.
- Baptism is a symbol of spiritual cleansing. As Jesus forgives us we experience new life. In this act we identify with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith in front of the church.
- As a biblical rite of initiation into the Body of Christ, baptism of believers may be considered a prerequisite for joining the membership of the church.

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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### 1. It tells us who should be baptized.

The Bible verses below clearly teach that every person who has believed in Christ should be baptized.

*"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized..."*

Acts 2:41

*"Simon himself believed and was baptized..."* Acts 8:13

*"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News ... and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."* Acts 8:12

In these records of baptism, it is indicated that the person first "repented" of sin and "believed" in Christ and then was baptized. One must be a believer in Christ to be eligible for baptism.

## Reflection #1

*When and where did you first put your faith in Christ?  
What were the circumstances that led you to that place of commitment?*

### 2. It tells us why we should be baptized.

Disciples of Christ are baptized to follow the example set by Jesus.

*"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."  
Mark 1:9*

Jesus' last words to His disciples also commanded it.

*"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" Matthew 28:19-20*

Baptism doesn't make you a believer; it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart to live out the teachings of Christ.

## Reflection #2

*How has your belief in Christ impacted your lifestyle?*

### 3. It tells us when we should be baptized

As soon as a person believes in Christ he or she may be baptized.

*"Those who believed. . . were baptized. . . that day!" Acts 2:41*

*"Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized? And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.'" Acts 8:35-39*

Baptism is for believers. A believer is someone who has realized their sin separated them from God. They have given up all efforts to reach God through good works or religious activity. They have concluded that Jesus Christ's death on the cross for their sins is the only thing that can bridge the gap between them and God. A believer is someone who has decided to trust Christ alone for their salvation, so much so that they become disciples to His way of living.

### *Reflection #3*

*Why do you want to be baptized at this time?*

### 4. It tells us that we should be baptized by immersion

We are baptized by immersion because Jesus was baptized that way.

*"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water." Matthew 3:16*

In fact, every baptism in the Bible was by immersion.

*". . . then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water. . ." Acts 8:38-39*

The Greek word used in the Bible, "baptizo", means "to immerse or dip under water."

In Romans 6:1-11, the Apostle Paul explains how the immersion mode of baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going under water pictures Christ's death and coming out of the water illustrates His resurrection.

### Reflection #4

*Does your commitment to Christ reflect the commitment that baptism implies in this booklet? Is baptism the appropriate next step in your faith journey, or is there another step that may be more fitting for you at this time?*

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What about infant baptism?

If the purpose of baptism is to publicly identify a believer in Jesus Christ, the question may well be asked by some, "What was the significance of my baptism as a baby?" In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, and prayed for them, and told us to welcome them; but He did not baptize them, and He did not tell anyone else to baptize them. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation.

Although the old covenant practice of infant circumcision is sometimes used as a rationale for infant baptism, the biblical definition of the functions of circumcision and of baptism shows that those two institutions fulfilled different purposes in their respective covenants. The equation is never made in the Bible between the circumcision of male infants in the old covenant and the baptism of born-again believers, much less of infants, in the new covenant. (Fellowship Missionary Church does encourage Christian parents to present their children for the ceremony of dedication, where God's blessing is formally invoked upon the children and the parents publicly commit themselves to raise the children in accordance with the teachings of Scripture.)

If you were baptized as a child, it was the hope of your parents that you would be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes. It in no way discredits the baptism you received as a child. Your parents were following the tradition of their church.

### **Is there a minimum age for a young person to be baptized?**

There is no minimum age in the Bible, but the FMC staff recommends that children wait until they are 12 years old to be baptized because the symbolism of baptism requires adult levels of understanding.

Proverbs 20:25 issues a significant caution against the danger of making a vow before adequate knowledge, forethought, and reflection have been given. In an effort to prevent young people from making a premature commitment that they may not fully understand, this minimum age has been established.

The saving relationship with Jesus that comes through faith in His sacrifice for sins should be entered as soon as a child understands personal responsibility for sin and God's answer to that problem through the death of Jesus. Baptism can wait until a young person is able to express his or her discipleship in a way that will have lifelong meaning. We will consider requests for baptism of younger children on an individual basis.

### **Can I be re-baptized as a way of renewing my faith?**

If you were baptized as an infant or any time before you accepted Christ, it is fitting and good to be re-baptized as a believer.

If you were once baptized as a believer, there is no reason to be re-baptized. Perhaps you have let your discipleship slip into a lifestyle displeasing to the Lord, but now have recovered from that slip and want to show the Lord and His people that you are once again a growing disciple. That's wonderful. We suggest that you talk to an FMC pastor and have a time of re-dedication surrounded by people who will support and love you as you go forward.

Baptism is a holy sacrament that is "once, forever". But we may repeatedly rededicate ourselves to the Lord as our discipleship flourishes and we understand more and more what it means to follow Christ.

# LET'S BEGIN!

If you have come to the point in your spiritual journey that you are ready to be baptized, go to [www.fmcfw.org/#baptism](http://www.fmcfw.org/#baptism) (if you haven't done so already) to check the date of the next baptism and schedule an interview.

Just as the bride and groom tell of their love for one another through the symbol of rings, you can also show the world of your union with Christ through baptism, and we are ready to walk with you as your discipleship blossoms.

## *Reflection #5*

*What are your future plans for spiritual growth and personal discipleship after you complete this step of baptism?*