

# The Basics of Baptism

## What is baptism?

The word *baptize* means to “to immerse” or “to dip.” For Christians, baptism identifies a person with Jesus Christ. It is an outward sign of an inward commitment.

A wedding ring is a great illustration of baptism. A wedding ring doesn’t make you married. It shows other people that you are – that you have made a life commitment to another person. It lets them know that you belong to someone else.

Through baptism we publicly declare ourselves to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It indicates that we now belong to him.

## Why do we do it?

Jesus told his followers, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt. 28:19-20) Here at Shoestring we follow those instructions by baptizing in water those who have made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

## Who is it for?

Water baptism is for the person who has become a follower of Jesus Christ. It’s for the person who has come to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, believed that Jesus is the only answer to their sin, and has made a commitment to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Some Christian traditions practice infant baptism. Since we understand baptism to represent a commitment that a person makes, we practice what is known as *believer’s baptism*. We encourage children to wait until they can understand the commitment they are making before being baptized.

We also encourage parents to publicly dedicate their children to the Lord. A Child Dedication is actually a commitment the parents make before God to raise their children to know and love the Lord, with the hope that one day the child will make a decision to follow the Lord.



## What baptism is not.

The Bible is very clear that baptism does not save a person or add to their salvation in any way. We are saved by grace through faith alone. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism is simply an act of obedience because Jesus commanded us to do it.

## What do I need to do to be baptized?

First, be sure that you are a follower of Jesus Christ. This means that you have trusted Him as your Lord and Savior and that you have made a commitment to follow Him. Second, understand the meaning and purpose of baptism. It’s a symbol of our commitment to Jesus, and of our identification with the church, the body of Christ. It doesn’t save us or add to our salvation. Lastly, let one of our elders know that you want to be baptized and attend the baptism class.

## How do we do it?

Our baptisms usually take place at someone’s home. Bring a bathing suit, a t-shirt and shorts that can get wet, a towel, and a dry change of clothes. Be ready to tell those present why you want to be baptized. A simple, “I’m telling the world that I am a follower of Jesus Christ and have given my life to him” is fine. You might want to bring a camera or invite some friends or family to share this special occasion.