

apostles—and the church they would establish—by giving them two clear commands: to **baptize** disciples and to **teach** them (*Matthew 28:18-20*).

Neither of these commands are to be treated as an option...it isn't up to us to decide. In fact, just as The Shepherd's Church considers teaching the Bible a non-negotiable (*which may be why you're attending*), we also view the command to baptize disciples as equally clear. We can't find any justification for carving these verses in half. As a result, we're committed to literally fulfilling **both** commands in Christ's great commission—no matter how inconvenient or unpopular.

**Q:** If I was baptized somewhere else by immersion after my conversion to Christ, do I have to be baptized again at The Shepherd's Church?

**A:** No, we do not require that The Shepherd's Church be the baptizing agent for all believers who want to join our fellowship. Your baptism is considered valid if you were immersed following your personal acceptance and trust in Christ alone for your salvation.

If you have any other questions or desire to talk with someone further about your baptism, please contact the Senior Pastor's office at (919) 233-9100.

## BAPTISM CHECKLIST

- Prepare your written testimony and choose a favorite scripture verse.
- Schedule your baptism by contacting [baptism@shepherds.org](mailto:baptism@shepherds.org).
- Meet with officiating pastor to review your testimony, share your verse.

GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH  
ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN  
THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF  
THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.  
TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL  
THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE  
COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM  
WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE  
END OF THE WORLD.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Contact Email:

[baptism@shepherds.org](mailto:baptism@shepherds.org)



THE  
SHEPHERD'S  
CHURCH

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# BAPTISM



Baptism is an important first step in our spiritual journey as Christians. It's an outward symbol celebrating the inner commitment we've made to Jesus. The information in this brochure will help clarify any questions you may have about baptism, and how to take a next step if you're interested in being baptized.



THE  
SHEPHERD'S  
CHURCH

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**BAPTISM** is the outward expression of a disciple's inner conversion to the person and Gospel of Jesus Christ. The water serves as a symbol for the grave of Jesus as the disciple is immersed, symbolically identifying with His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead.

The only way to biblically experience this ordinance is through immersion, which is why the New Testament never uses any other word for Christian baptism than *bapto* (*and derivatives*), which means "to immerse." The Greek words for "sprinkle" and "pour" are *never* used in the New Testament texts which speak of this unique ordinance of identification with Christ's work on our behalf. Baptism then becomes a rich personal and physical story of a person's spiritual faith and trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism does not save anyone or wash anyone's sins away. If that were possible, our justification would be by faith plus baptism (*works*). And we'd probably want to drain the baptismal tank and refill it every time! Baptism is not for people who *want* to be saved, but for those who already are—by grace, through faith in Christ alone (*Ephesians 2:8-9*).

Furthermore, baptism is not something parents are to do for their child; rather, it is something Christians do out of obedience to God. That's why the command in Matthew 28 is to immerse *disciples* . . . not infants or unbelievers.

Finally, baptism is an ordinance that identifies the disciple with the New Testament church. At The Shepherd's Church, we follow the progression of Acts 2:41 closely. First, we require that members testify to having received the message (*that is, they've believed the Gospel*), and then they must have been baptized by immersion sometime in their life after their conversion to Christianity.

**Q: Isn't church membership a modern invention? Why require anything of those who want to have a part in the church?**

**A:** The early church clearly kept a roll (a list), and those who believed the Gospel and followed the Lord in baptism were added to that roll. Peter mentions those having been baptized as being "added to their number." This was more than symbolic language—they actually knew who and how many were joined to their growing fellowship.

**Q: Doesn't baptism mean that I'm just beginning my new life in Christ? Am I going to have to "start over"?**

**A:** For many believers, baptism by immersion follows soon after their conversion to Christ. However, depending on their background, many people are simply not made aware of the biblical teaching regarding the nature, mode, and symbolism of baptism. So they may have grown up in Christ for many years before encountering a literal exposition on this ordinance. It's not starting over; it's simply obeying what they've only recently discovered in the Scripture... something we should be doing all the time!

**Q: If I was sprinkled as a child and then plan to be immersed as a newly converted adult, does that mean I'm baptized again?**

**A:** No, according to our biblical understanding of baptism and the meaning of the word *immersion*, you have yet to be baptized the *first* time if you were only sprinkled or poured upon earlier in life.

**Q: Since baptism is a work we do for God (*thus, not a requirement for salvation*), are we making too much of this ordinance to require immersion? Isn't that just a symbol?**

**A:** If you attended Shepherd's communion service and we handed out Fritos and Dr. Pepper, would you feel certain

that you participated in the biblical ordinance of communion? We don't believe so. Fritos and Dr. Pepper would not literally apply the rich, symbolic elements given in passages related to communion: bread and the fruit of the vine.

**So then, those who had received His word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls...and the Lord was adding to their number day by day...**

**Acts 2:41 & 47**

Both elements refer to the atoning work of Christ. The grape juice speaks to His having been crushed on the cross and the shedding of His blood; the bread refers to Christ's being buried and His rising with new life, as a seed that has sprouted after being sown in the ground.

If we truly want to appreciate the *symbolism* of communion, we must *literally* consume the elements (*fruit/bread*) prescribed in Scripture for our mouths.

So, also, if we truly want to experience the symbolism of baptism, we must literally apply the element (*water*) prescribed in Scripture to the covering of our bodies.

**Q: If I get baptized by immersion, having been sprinkled as a child, will I demean my parents and those from my past who took me through that experience?**

**A:** Not at all. In fact, your parents did what they were led to believe in good faith and with the best intentions. Your decision to be biblically baptized does not erase their finest hopes and prayers for you. They were simply following the liturgy of their church and its leadership.

Keep this in mind: when you are baptized by immersion as a believer, you will not simply be following the liturgy of The Shepherd's Church or the opinions of her leadership—you will be following the clear teaching and application of *Scripture*.

**Q: Does this issue really have to be so black-and-white?**

**A:** Personally, we understand the challenges related to applying Scripture in such a dramatic and public manner. However, Jesus Christ commissioned His *(over)*