

# GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

## *Baptism – Symbol of New Life*

### **What is the Meaning and Significance?**

Baptism is first and foremost identification with Jesus Christ. The act of baptism is intended to symbolize what has happened to us spiritually as a result of faith in Christ's death and resurrection.

Water baptism is not a requirement for salvation, but rather reminds us of what our salvation required of Jesus. It is also intended to be a public testimony of one's trust and new life in Christ. It is an act of obedience in response to faith in Christ.

Being lowered into the water symbolizes our death to sin's power over us as a result of Jesus' physical death and burial. Being raised back up out of the water symbolizes our new spiritual birth as a result of Jesus coming back to life.

Baptism gives a full picture of the meaning of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Bible passages like Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 (although not referring to water baptism in the immediate context) do picture for us the reality of Christ's work and the truth that baptism portrays, when the text says believers have "been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through (their) faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead." In baptism the Christian testifies that he belongs to Christ. In fact, the process of being submerged identifies him/her as a willing participant in this completed work of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ. The inner reality of salvation having already occurred in the life of the one being baptized, is fully (and publicly) declared in the practice of water baptism.

### **Believers Baptism in the New Testament**

In the New Testament we find that water baptism for the Christian is intimately connected with the following:

1. A public identification with the person of Jesus Christ. Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a public profession of their faith.
2. An act of obedience to the command of Christ (Matt 28:19) fulfilled by Christians who have subjected themselves to His sovereignty.
3. A public commitment to live obediently according to God's standards of righteousness. (Matt 3:15)
4. A willingness to follow Christ's example of water baptism. (Matt 3:13-17)
5. A desire to identify with the body of Christ as evidenced by the local church that is witnessing the baptism event. (Matt 28:19)

### **Who should be baptized?**

The congregation of Grace Community understands the Scripture to teach that only persons who have trusted Jesus Christ for their personal salvation are qualified for baptism. Furthermore, we understand Scripture to call every believer to be baptized according to Christ's command in Matthew 28:19-20 "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." Since becoming a disciple of Christ involves faith, *baptism* as an accompanying act is for believers.

Regarding infants, while we acknowledge that some churches hold to a theology of infant baptism, at Grace Community Church we provide Christian parents the opportunity to present their child for a ceremony of dedication. At this ceremony, God's blessing is asked on the life of the child and the parents publicly commit themselves to raise their child in accordance with the teachings of Scripture.

### **How is baptism done?**

In the New Testament the Greek word for baptism (*baptizo*) means "to dip" or "to submerge". Therefore our normal means of performing baptism is by immersion. You are welcome to contact the church to speak to one of the ministers should you wish to discuss the church position on baptism.

### **If you would like to be baptized...**

We would be delighted to help you see the importance of following Jesus' example in baptism. If you have made the decision and wish to arrange a time for baptism, please contact the church office (253-833-5660) and ask for Pastor Dan Miller.