

# Palm Valley Church

## *Identifying with Christ through Baptism*

### **IDENTIFYING WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM**

After accepting Jesus into your life as your Savior, the next step is to identify yourself with Christ as His follower. The best way that you can show that you have become a follower of Christ is by being baptized. Like a wedding ring, baptism outwardly expresses a change that has occurred in your heart.

Baptism identifies us with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 the Apostle Paul wrote:

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.

Going under the water symbolizes that you are putting to death and burying your old self as it was before choosing Christ. It is also a reminder of what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross for our sins and was buried. In Romans 6:4 it says, "For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives."

When you come up out of the water it symbolizes your resurrection and re-birth to live a new life as a forgiven child of God. It is also a reminder that Jesus conquered death by being raised from the dead. His resurrection shows His power and authority to forgive our sins and to fulfill the promises He made. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

Because Baptism is such a significant symbol, Jesus instructed His followers to baptize those who become His disciples (followers). In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

### **WHAT WILL ACTUALLY HAPPEN AT MY BAPTISM?**

Here at Palm Valley Church, we baptize by immersion. That means going completely under the water. This is how Jesus was baptized, and how people in Biblical examples were baptized. It also best illustrates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and of you as you put aside your life as it was before Christ and begin living your life as a new person in Him.

The pastor will invite you into the water next to him. You will be introduced and asked about your decision to accept Christ's forgiveness and to be baptized. You will have the opportunity at that time to share your story of what God has done in your life.

You will then lie back into and under the water. You will then be immediately raised back up and out. The pastor will typically put one hand behind your upper back and will hold your hand with the other. This will enable him to guide you into the water and back up again. Afterward, you will exit the water and dry off with a towel.

If someone has been instrumental in your decision to follow Christ, such as a spouse or close friend, we invite them to assist the pastor in your baptism.

### **WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?**

Women should wear long shorts and a dark top (not a tank top) and may also want to wear a swimsuit underneath. Men may wear a swimsuit (such as board shorts) and a dark shirt. The clothing should cover sufficiently and conservatively as you enter the water as well as once you are wet. Bring a change of clothes, a towel, and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. There will typically be a location for you to change clothes if you would like. There will also be towels and clothing available at the baptism for those who forget.

### **WHAT IF I HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS?**

Our Pastors can perform a baptism service in special circumstances; however, we are able to accommodate most needs at the baptism service. If you have questions or concerns in this area, please ask.

### **WHO WILL BE THERE?**

We encourage you to invite family and friends so that they can celebrate with you. You will especially want to invite those who don't yet know Christ, or that have not yet been baptized. Invitations will be available for your use at the resource table.

There will also be church staff and others from the church who will want to be there to encourage you in this important step. A photographer and/or videographer will be there as well to record the event (You will receive a copy).

### **WILL I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY?**

You will be asked to share that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You will then be given the opportunity to briefly (one to two minutes) share your story of what God has done in your life and what led you to be baptized at this time. If you have questions about this, we can work with you on it.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After you have been baptized, you will be able to celebrate the event with family and friends. This is a significant event and you will want to celebrate it as one. It is symbolic of your spiritual birthday, so you will want to enjoy the moment.

About one to two weeks afterward, you will receive a certificate commemorating your baptism. You will typically receive a photo and/or a DVD of the event as well.

Now you will want to continue to take the next steps in your faith. Studying your Bible and praying daily as well as becoming part of a Home Team and getting involved by serving in the church are excellent next steps that you can take that will help you continue to grow toward becoming more like Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter encouraged us as Christians to continue to grow in Christ so that we will remain strong in our faith:

So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:10-11)

## SHOULD MY CHILD BE A CERTAIN AGE BEFORE BEING BAPTIZED?

People in the Bible were baptized as a response to their faith in Jesus Christ. Because we want to follow the example and teaching of the Bible, we wait until children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of their relationship with Jesus Christ and the significance of baptism before we baptize them.

The age of 10 is a suggested age for baptism based on the maturity level of the average 10 year old, and we typically do not baptize children younger. Some of the reasons we wait until this age are:

- It is more likely to be their decision rather than the desire of their parents.
- They are more likely to understand the impact and weight of what they are committing to.
- They will remember the event better and it will be more meaningful to them in future years. We baptize many who had previously been baptized as children who did not fully grasp the significance at that time.

We ask children considering baptism to attend the **"First Steps"** class beforehand. This class will help them understand their decision more fully, and help determine if they are ready for this significant step in their faith. For more information, contact the church office by phone at (623)536-2106 or by email at [info@palmvalley.org](mailto:info@palmvalley.org)

Some churches practice a "**baptism of confirmation**" or "**dedication**" for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. Palm Valley Church does have a child dedication service, but does not baptize children.

The purpose of baptism is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ. At Palm Valley, it is a membership requirement that each person must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were "confirmed" as children.

### **CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?**

If each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. There are examples in the Bible of households who believed and were baptized together, such as:

- Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, and everyone in his household believed in the Lord. Many others in Corinth also heard Paul, became believers, and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

As mentioned previously, we ask that children who wish to be baptized first attend the "First Steps" class which is designed to better prepare them and to make sure that they are ready for this step in their faith.

It is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

When a spouse or child is being baptized, we generally invite the baptized spouse or parent to participate by assisting the officiating pastor.

### **HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR THE NEXT BAPTISM?**

Here are two ways that you can sign up or request additional information on baptism:

- Mark the "I would like information about baptism" box on the back of the communication card you receive in the bulletin when attending service.
- Contact the church office by phone at (623)536-2106 or by email at [info@palmvalley.org](mailto:info@palmvalley.org)

All Scriptures are quoted from the New Living Translation - Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. unless otherwise noted.

