



Baptism

A Guide to Understanding & Experiencing Believer's Baptism

Believer's baptism is one of the most exciting things that happens in a church that's seeking to follow the New Testament pattern. Ironbridge places great importance on this strategic command given to us by Jesus, because it deals with our beliefs and about salvation, the Christian life, the church and evangelism.

In order for you to get the most from your spiritual journey while here at Ironbridge, it's important that you understand and embrace these basic Biblical truths concerning believer's baptism.

1. THE DEFINITION OF BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

- A. Baptism is the outward expression of an inward reality. It is the first public step of obedience for a new Christian. It is simply God's way for us to publicly profess (announce) our personal faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself is our model because he was baptized by immersion and commanded his followers to baptize new believers (Matthew 28:19-20). The physical act of baptism by immersion *does not save* a person nor magically make them Christians. Baptism *does not complete salvation*. Baptism is strictly symbolic! The physical act of baptism does not wash your sins away! Only a personal faith relationship with Jesus brings about the forgiveness of sins and the free gift of eternal life.

2. THE CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM

- A. Baptism is exclusively for people who have repented of their sin, and have placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. Thus, we refer to it as *believer's* baptism. Acts 2:41 is instructive at this point... "Those who received His word were baptized..." Acts 8:35-38 records the Ethiopian official who was baptized *after* trusting in Jesus.

3. THE TIME AND PLACE FOR BAPTISM

- A. Believer's baptism is the first public step in living a life of obedience to Jesus. A new Christian should be baptized *as soon as possible after* trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord. See Acts 9:18 (Conversion of Philippian jailer) for examples. It is clear from an examination of these scriptures and others that the *timing* of a person's baptism is an important factor.
- B. We often say that a person should experience baptism on "*the correct side of their conversion experience*" – *after* their conversion experience, not before.

4. THE REASONS FOR BAPTISM

- A. **TO PUBLICLY PROFESS THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST.** Believer's baptism is a statement of our faith in Christ. It is not a statement of our salvation, because Baptism is symbolic and has no saving power. Within the Roman Catholic tradition and some Protestant traditions, *baptismal regeneration* is a belief that the physical act of baptism is a part of the salvation process. Baptismal regeneration is the idea that saving power is in

the physical act of baptism. Some believe that baptism *completes* the salvation process begun by Christ's death on the cross. The idea that baptism saves you stems from a misunderstanding of Acts 2:38 which reads, "...Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *for* the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (NASB) In the original Greek language of the New Testament, the italicized word "for" is the word "εἰς" which can correctly be interpreted "because of," "on the basis of," "as a result of," or "with respect to." Ironbridge does not teach baptismal regeneration. Therefore, the message and meaning of a person's baptism is an important factor. At Ironbridge, we encourage every believer to be baptized as a symbolic statement of their faith in Christ and not as a saving act that imparts salvation.

- B. **TO SYMBOLIZE JESUS' DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION.** Baptism by immersion is a dramatic, visual picture of Jesus' redemptive mission. It's a living "symbolic sermon" of Jesus' death on the cross; His physical burial; and His triumphant resurrection from the grave three days later.
- C. **TO SYMBOLIZE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** Baptism is a powerful picture of an obedient Christian lifestyle. 11 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that we are "new creatures" in Christ and that a new kind of obedience should characterize our lives now that we are Christians! See Romans 6:1-11.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

- A. The word for "baptism" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word "βαπτίζω" which means to *dip, plunge, submerge, or immerse*. In classical Greek, it was used to describe the submerging of a dish in water, the sinking of a ship, or the plunging of a knife into a victim.
- B. Over the centuries, different Christian groups have developed a variety of methods for baptism: sprinkling, pouring, and full immersion. *We believe that baptism by immersion paints the truest picture of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and the "dying to sin and arising to new life in Christ" for the believer.* All believers that have never identified with Christ through a baptism of full immersion are encouraged to do so.

6. TRANSFERRING YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO IRONBRIDGE

- A. The question is often asked, "Will my baptismal experience transfer to Ironbridge?" The simple answer is YES ... *if* your baptismal experience affirms all three Biblical distinctives.
 - a. The Proper Moment – *after* conversion.
 - b. The Proper Message – a statement of your *faith* and not your salvation.
 - c. The Proper Method – *immersion* to symbolize death, burial and resurrection.

7. CONCERNING INFANT BAPTISM

- A. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation. If you were baptized as an infant, it was the intent of your parents

that you would one day be a devoted follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents' wishes. Believers coming to Ironbridge who have never been baptized as believers are asked to do so as a next step in their spiritual journey. We encourage every believer to experience this dynamic step of faith as they unite with their new spiritual family. It is an exciting new chapter in your walk with God, and your parents would be thrilled to know that now as an adult you are a fully devoted follower of Jesus. --portions of this section on infant baptism were adapted from Willow Creek Community Church's statement on baptism.

8. THE BENEFITS & BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Whenever we obey the commands of Jesus, there are many benefits for our lives and others! There are at least seven important spiritual benefits that you will enjoy when you experience believer's baptism at Ironbridge.

- A. **IT'S A MESSAGE TO THE UNREACHED.** Every time a person is baptized, the unreached are observing a "*sermon in symbol*" reminding them of the saving power of the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. You might just be helping someone take an important step closer to accepting Christ as their personal Savior.
- B. **IT'S A CHALLENGE TO OTHER BELIEVERS.** Every time a person is baptized, every Christian is challenged to live an obedient lifestyle. See Romans 6:1-14. Verse 4 of this helpful verse says, "Therefore we have been BURIED with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might WALK in newness of life."
- C. **IT'S AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP OF OBEDIENCE.** The Lord will be pleased with your willingness to publicly identify with Him and your new spiritual family at Ironbridge. Jesus said, "If you LOVE Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15)
- D. **IT CREATES EXCITEMENT THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH.** When Christians are baptized on a regular basis, a spirit of excitement and joy permeates the congregation. See Acts 2:43-47 and Acts 8:39. It's the "*drama of decision!*"
- E. **IT STRENGTHENS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.** By experiencing believer's Baptism by immersion, you'll be sharing in a common experience with every other Christian at Ironbridge. There is usually such a spirit of joy and acceptance that the congregation often affirms a person's baptism through spontaneous applause during the worship service. Take a look at Hebrews 13:7.
- F. **IT'S A POWERFUL AFFIRMATION OF BIBLICAL TEACHING.** Believer's baptism by immersion is a beautiful way to publicly identify and affirm your commitment to your new spiritual family here at Ironbridge. See Hebrews 13:17.
- G. **IT'S A PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY.** Your baptism will become a cherished shared memory; a significant spiritual mile-marker on your journey with God. You'll immediately have something in common with every baptized believer at Ironbridge.

9. PREPARING FOR YOUR BAPTISM

- A. **BAPTISMS HAPPEN THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH AS WELL AS EASTER SUNDAY:** Check your calendar to see which one would be the most convenient for you and your family. You can schedule your baptism for either the 9:00 am or 10:45 am worship experience. Just contact the church office at 796-6868 to schedule the date and time for you baptism. You may request a specific member of our ministry team (pastor, deacon, teacher, bridge group leader, mentor relative, etc.) to baptize you. When there are multiple baptisms occurring during one time slot, just one member of the Ironbridge team will be assigned to conduct all of the baptisms for that particular time slot.
- B. **INVITE YOUR FRIENDS, RELATIVE, AND NEIGHBORS.** Remember, your public baptism is a powerful witness to the unchurched and the unreached. Your obedience in baptism may influence someone in your network of friends and relationship to seriously consider the claims of Christ. You never know how God might use your public profession of faith to help someone you know to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior!
- C. **BRING A SWIMSUIT OR CLOTHES SUITABLE FOR GETTING WET.** A swimming suit works best. Or you can bring a pair of shorts and t-shirt to wear during your baptism. You'll be wearing a white baptismal robe over your clothes, so don't worry about the quality or style of the clothing you wear underneath. Wear clothing that is lightweight and doesn't absorb lots of water. Denim and corduroy are not appropriate. It's also a good idea to bring a *watertight bag* with you. It makes a great place to store your wet clothing after your baptism. You can bring a towel or you may use a towel provided by the church. Be prepared to have a photo taken to record your baptism. Someone will be available to help capture this important event.
- D. **ARRIVE AT LEAST 20 MINUTES EARLY.** On the day of your baptism, plan on arriving in the auditorium at least 20 minutes before the beginning of the next worship experience. Enter the door to the left of the stage in the worship center. A short hallway will lead you into our changing area with several curtained changing stations. A member of our ministry team will be available to assist you, answer any questions, and pray with you.
- E. **DO NOT LEAVE VALUABLES UNATTENDED DURING YOUR BAPTISM.** Be sure and leave your valuables (cash, credit cards, jewelry, cell phone, etc.) in a safe place or with a person you trust. Thieves love to attend church looking for an easy target. Always be vigilant. Don't ever assume that it couldn't happen at church, because it certainly could. We want your baptism to be a joyous experience and not an expensive one. Use caution. Unattended valuables left in the changing area during baptisms could be at risk.
- F. **AFTER YOUR BAPTISM, JOIN IN THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE.** After drying off and changing into your regular clothes, feel free to rejoin your family and friends in the auditorium for the rest of the worship experience.



Baptism Form

Fill out the form on the next page of this Baptism Guide and turn it in to the church office, or you may give it to a member of our Ironbridge Ministry Team at the conclusion of your Baptism Prep Meeting. Keep this guide for your own information and encouragement.

PREFERRED DATE: _____ Which service? 9:00 am 10:45 am

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Mobile Phone: _____ Other Phone: _____

Email: _____

Have you ever been baptized as an adult? Yes No

Write a couple of paragraphs and share your story of how you've come to put your faith in Christ. You can answer these questions, "How did I come to know Christ?" "Why do I want to be baptized?" "Why do I want to tell people that I'm following Jesus?" This will be read at your baptism so try and be concise. Help is available from the staff.

Permission to Use Your Story & Images:

Ironbridge would like your permission to publish your story (in whole/part) and to use photo or video images of you and your baptism for promotion and spiritual encouragement. Only your name will be used and no other personal information will be posted. These images may be used in the church, in printed materials, and on the internet. No photos and/or video images of children under age 12 will be posted without written permission from the parents.

I give my permission

I do not give my permission

Signed: _____