

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM



Congratulations on your desire to be baptized! Your decision to turn from sin and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is the most important decision you will ever make. After beginning a new relationship with Jesus, an important next step is to be baptized. This is a special moment in your life. Your faith family at Ashworth looks forward to celebrating with you at your baptism. This should help you understand more about baptism at Ashworth.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism publicly demonstrates your identification with Jesus. It is a picture of Christ's burial and resurrection. Baptism also illustrates your new life as a Christian and the cleansing from your sins. Baptism does not make you a believer - it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not save you, only your faith in Christ and through His power does that occur. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it is the outward symbol of the commitment you make in your heart.

HOW DO WE BAPTIZE AT ASHWORTH?

At Ashworth, we practice baptism by immersion or dipping the person under the water. We baptize this way because Jesus was baptized that way and the baptisms we see in the Bible were done this way. It is also a great symbol of death to your old way of life and resurrection to life in Jesus.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Everyone who has confessed with their mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believed in their heart that God raised him from the dead is saved and should be baptized.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as you have believed. There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect", you'll never feel "good enough!"

HOW OLD SHOULD MY KIDS BE TO BE BAPTIZED?

We believe children should be baptized when they are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of salvation and baptism.

Preparing a child for baptism is one of the most rewarding and joyful experiences of parenthood. After years of planting seeds of faith, it is an awesome privilege to participate in the harvest. It is essential for a child to understand what it means to offer a lifetime commitment to Jesus before making this most important decision of salvation and baptism.

MY YOUNG CHILD IS ALREADY ASKING ABOUT BAPTISM. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Often children will bring up the issue of baptism before they have an adequate understanding of the meaning of conversion to Christ. There are twin traps to be avoided. One is a parent's natural inclination to see one's own child as developmentally advanced for their age and press ahead assuming more knowledge than what exists. The other danger is to just put off a child with a cryptic "you're not old enough yet." Parents need to affirm the child's enthusiasm while helping them understand and allow time for growth.

Since baptism is a visible "concrete" act they have seen others experience, it is easy for a child to want to "get baptized." But not every child who expresses an interest in baptism has had a genuine encounter with God. Often children begin asking about baptism just because they are seeking information, not because they are ready to make a decision. Or they may be wanting to please their parents or Sunday school teachers by doing what is right. Still others view baptism as a necessary initiation ceremony into the church.

Children are capable of learning enough of the right words to say by memory that Jesus died for their sin, but do they really understand their own need for a Savior? Do they show an understanding that their own sin has separated them from God and demonstrate a sincere desire to repent? As baptism is only a part of one's conversion to Christ, the big decision is not "to be baptized," but rather to "become a Christian."

As a parent, you are in the best position to judge whether or not your child is truly ready for baptism. If your child seems only to be seeking information, explain baptism using simple concrete terms they can understand. If you feel the time is not right, affirm your child for having the desire to do the right thing and assure them that you will talk about it again when they are older.

If you feel your child is not ready to make a commitment, encourage them to wait. In Flavil Yeakley's intriguing study of *"Why Churches Grow"*, he discovered that the older the child is when making a decision, the greater the odds are that they will continue to grow. Conversely, the younger the child, the greater the chance that they will disregard that decision later in life. We dare not deny children the opportunity to respond to the the message of Jesus, nor do we need to push them too quickly. We simply must provide children a clear path to the Savior. As Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

HOW CAN I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY FOR BAPTISM?

Of course, there is no system or checklist that you can go through to tell whether or not your son or daughter is ready to be baptized. But here are a few questions to help you think and pray through as you consider whether or not to baptize your children:

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM

Whose idea was it to get baptized? If your child thinks that you want them to get baptized, they may do it just to please you. If your child wants to get baptized without any prompting from you, that can be evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in their life calling them to or confirming their salvation.

Does your child understand the gospel? Do they understand what sin is, and that the penalty for sin has been taken by the death of Jesus? Do they understand that there's no amount of good works they can do to please God, but that Jesus was perfect on their behalf? Do they understand that Jesus's resurrection means that there is no more penalty for sin to be paid, and that we can live with God forever through faith in him?

Is there evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in your child's life? When a person is brought to faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them and begins to change them to make them look more like Jesus. Do you see conviction and repentance of sin? Do you see a love for God and His Word, the Bible?

Do you have others that you can process this through with? Your spouse, if applicable, should be the first person that you pray and discuss this with. But think about involving others as well. It's a safe bet that your friends and others at church would love to pray with you about this important decision. Your church leadership and staff would also be great to talk with.

Whether or not to baptize your child is an important decision. But this is not a life and death decision, and not an eternal life or eternal death decision. The act of baptism itself does not save a person. Only God can do that. And a believer who doesn't get baptized has not committed the unforgivable sin.

If you're not sure if now is the right time, then it might be best to hold off. No harm can come to your child by waiting, since it doesn't impact their salvation. A child who is older will also be able to better articulate their faith, and will better remember this important step of faith.

If your child can articulate what Jesus has done for them, if you see fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and if you and your spouse agree that now is the right time, then there's no reason to wait. Let the church leadership or staff know your child is ready and they can be baptized at the next baptismal service.

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM



WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?

All participants will wear a dark colored T-Shirt provided by Ashworth that you may keep as a reminder of this special day. Women should wear a swimsuit under the shirt and shorts. Men may wear a swimsuit or shorts.

WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

At the beginning of the service, one of the pastors will briefly explain the meaning of baptism. You will wait in the room off of the baptistery until it is time for the baptism. Someone from our staff will tell you when and where to show up for these proceedings. One of the pastors will introduce you and then either a pastor or whoever has been designated to perform the baptism will briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the baptistery, dry off, and return to the sanctuary when ready.

WHO CAN ATTEND MY BAPTISM?

Anyone and everyone! In fact, we encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend this very special day.

WHERE DO I GO ON THE DAY I AM BEING BAPTIZED?

The week before your baptism, someone from the church staff will reach out to you to let you know what time and where you will need to meet before your baptism. It will be important for you to arrive on time and at the designated location to make sure you receive any final instructions and have time to reflect on and enjoy your baptism.

PREPARING FOR BAPTISM



WHAT NEXT?

If after going through this packet personally and with your child, if applicable, you are ready to take your next step in baptism, simply go to <https://ashworth.church/ready-for-baptism/> and complete the acknowledgement form. Or you can sign and date this page of the packet and return it to the church office at least one week prior to the next scheduled baptism service.

BAPTISM ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read through the Ashworth Baptism Packet and am ready to publicly demonstrate my faith by following Jesus in water baptism. If my child is being baptized, I acknowledge that I have discussed this packet with my child and affirm that my child has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and is ready to follow Jesus in water baptism.

As parent or guardian of a minor child, this also acknowledges my permission for Ashworth Road Baptist Church to baptize my child.

Printed Name

Child's Name (if applicable)

Signed

Date