

Baptism at Grace



When someone shares parting words, people tend to listen.

For Jesus' disciples, it was no different. It was a spring day about 2,000 years ago when Jesus, having been raised from the dead, gave this charge to His followers:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19,20; English Standard Version; see also Luke 24:44-51). Shortly thereafter, He ascended to heaven.

Jesus' command to make disciples is the backbone of our mission at Grace Polaris Church: To honor God by multiplying devoted followers of Jesus through worship, community, training, and witness.

Why do we baptize people?

In short, we baptize people because Jesus told us to do it. In the words quoted above, Jesus explained that His disciples (followers) should baptize new disciples. The New Testament clearly associates water baptism with a person's conversion to new life in Jesus Christ (see Acts 2:38; 8:27-39; 16:14,15, 27-33; 18:8).

What does baptism mean?

At Grace, we believe that baptism is one of the ordinances of Jesus; that is, it is one of the physical practices that He wants us to carry on to remember certain spiritual truths.¹ First and foremost, water baptism symbolizes our association with the triune God, who exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19,20; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Greek word for baptize literally meant, "to immerse." Thus, when we baptize believers, we immerse them three times in water, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those who are baptized demonstrate their willing association with the triune God, but they also demonstrate obedience to the command of Jesus. To be baptized is to declare publicly that one has received the gift of salvation and new life in Jesus Christ. Thus, at Grace we baptize people in public settings in order to remember and testify collectively to Jesus' saving work. This public context also enables the person being baptized to testify to his allegiance to his Savior.

What does baptism not mean?

Baptism does not give a person eternal life; this only comes by trusting in Jesus (John 1:12; 20:31; Eph. 2:8-9). Being baptized is an act of obedience, not a matter of one's eternal destiny (Luke 23:40-43).

Furthermore, baptism does not automatically make someone a member of Grace Polaris Church. Those interested in becoming members of Grace Polaris should contact our church offices (614-888-7733) or visit us online (www.GracePolaris.org/membership) for information on our membership process.

¹ The other ordinance is the threefold communion service. Please see our brochure about communion for further information.

Who should be baptized?

The universal pattern in the New Testament is for believers to be baptized *after* having trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation (see, for example, Acts 2:38; 16:27–33). Baptism seems to have typically taken place soon after a person came to faith. Thus, we encourage individuals who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ to be baptized without delay.

The baptism process at Grace

There are regular opportunities to be baptized. During these times, individual believers are baptized in public settings at Grace, typically in a Sunday morning service. Here is the process:

1. Fill out and submit an application for baptism (www.GracePolaris.org/baptism)
2. Meet with a pastor or elder to review your application
3. Meet with our video team to record your testimony for your baptismal video to be used during the service on the day of your baptism
4. Invite all your friends and family for your baptism

Baptism interviews and video recordings will be scheduled once an application is received. Baptism interviews give Grace's leaders an opportunity to hear the candidate articulate their personal testimony and offer appropriate counsel based on the candidate's level of spiritual understanding.

If necessary, the church elders may elect to baptize an individual outside of the normal dates. However, all baptisms at Grace take place in some public setting in order to maintain the testimonial aspect of baptism that Jesus intended.

Special considerations

We encourage parents of children under 10 years of age to work closely with church leadership to determine whether a child is ready to be baptized. Our experience has shown that children are often unclear about the nature of the saving work of Jesus, and in some cases may be unclear about the reasons for baptism as well. Since baptism is a public testimony of those who have trusted in Jesus for salvation, we require candidates to be able to demonstrate to church leaders that they understand spiritual rebirth, and to be able to express this understanding in front of others. It is better to delay a child's baptism than to ask him to make a profession that he is unable to articulate or personalize.

In certain instances, it is not possible for an individual to be immersed in water because of physical or medical restrictions. In keeping with early church practice, the elders of Grace Polaris Church may opt to baptize such individuals by pouring water three times over the head of the believer.