



Baptism at South Mountain Community Church

The Wedding Illustration

Imagine a wedding. The bride and groom stand side-by-side in the front of the church. They take turns promising “till death do us part.” These two young lovers don’t look any different on the outside, but in just a few moments they will be married—united for life by invisible cords. Signifying that unseen union, the bride and groom exchange rings. These rings tell the world they are now married; they identify the couple as husband and wife.

Imagine that an unmarried couple is watching. They decide that they also want to get married; so they give each other rings. No commitments, no vows are made, just the symbols of the union. As they walk out of church right behind the last groomsman, their hands like those of the bride and groom bear the accepted token of lifetime love. However, only the couple that has made the commitment to each other is really married.

Symbol is not substance. Marriage depends on a commitment, not on rings. The same is true of becoming a Christian. What may outwardly identify you as a believer does not make you one. The wedding rings do not marry the couple. They are fitting symbols, but without the reality of commitment, a ring – like baptism – is void of meaning.

Background

The word baptize (βαπτίζω) was commonly used among the first century Greeks to signify a number of ordinary events. Examples include the dyeing of a garment by plunging it into a vat, the drawing of water by dipping one vessel into another, or even the sinking of ships at sea. It was also used metaphorically. For instance, a teacher might use the term when students bombard him with questions.

The literal and figurative forms of the word are both used in the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament. For example, in 2 Kings 5:14, when Naaman “dipped (baptized) himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him,” and in Isaiah 21:4, where the prophet wrote, “My mind reels, horror overwhelms (baptizes) me.”

Some form of the word is used 91 times in the New Testament. The vast majority of these cases refer to the act of submitting to immersion in a body of water in response to a person’s admission of his sinfulness, a sense of repentance, and the realization of the need for God’s mercy and forgiveness to overcome that condition. In view of this large body of Biblical references, South Mountain Community Church views baptism as an important milestone for every believer. It is a beautiful drama, ordained by God, in which an individual publicly proclaims his/her commitment to Christ in a visual portrayal of death and burial to self, and resurrection to walk in a new Christ-centered life. **Baptism itself does not save you – Jesus does. However, it is the expected practice for every follower of Christ (Acts 2:38-39).**

Some New Testament Specifics

In **Matthew 28:19-20** Jesus commands His followers to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...” Baptism is the means by which followers of Christ are identified.

In passages such as **Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48**, evidence shows baptism follows an individual’s decision to trust Christ alone for salvation. The New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only. **Baptism was never intended to provide salvation for an individual, but rather to publicly identify a person with Christ.**

In Romans 6:1-11, the apostle Paul explains how the immersion mode of baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going under water, pictures Christ’s death and coming out of the water illustrates His resurrection. Baptism symbolizes a commitment to enthrone Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life.

A Word Concerning Infant Baptism

If the purpose of baptism is to publicly identify a believer in Jesus Christ, the question may be asked by some, “What is the significance of my baptism as a baby?” In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held them, prayed for them, and told us to welcome them. However, He did not baptize them, and He did not tell anyone else to baptize them. Baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation.

If you were baptized as a child, it was the intent of your parents that you would one day be a follower of Christ. Your baptism as an adult can be viewed as the fulfillment of your parents’ wishes. It in no way repudiates the baptism you received as a child.

Are You Ready To Be Baptized?

Baptism is for believers. Believers realize their sin separates them from God. They have given up all efforts to reach God through good works or religious activity. They have concluded that only Jesus Christ’s death on the cross for their sins can bridge the gap between them and God. A believer is someone who has decided to trust Christ alone for salvation.

If you have come to that point in your spiritual journey, then the answer is yes, you are ready to be baptized. Just as the bride and groom tell of their love for one another through the symbol of rings, you should also want to show the world through baptism of your union with Christ. Let the invisible miracle that’s happened in you show through the symbolism He ordained for you.

Our Belief And Policy

Since the Bible commands it and Jesus Himself modeled it, we encourage every individual who has come to personal faith in Christ to be baptized. To be true to the spirit and meaning of the term (as used in Biblical examples as well as in first century Greek culture), South Mountain Community Church practices baptism by immersion.

Primary (Biblical) prerequisites for baptism include:

- An individual's acknowledgment of their sin, guilt before God and separation from Him without Christ (Romans 3:23, 6:20-23)
- Statement of belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, Son of God and God the Son (Matt. 16:16, John 8:24)
- Belief in His sacrificial death and resurrection, which satisfied the justice of God for the payment of sin (Col. 1:19-23)
- Understanding that belief in His death for you is sufficient payment for your sin and cannot be added to by anything you do (Eph. 2:8-10)
- Understanding that belief in Christ entails repentance (turning from sin) and following Him wherever He leads (Acts 3:19, Matt.10:38-39)

As a result of faith, an individual receives from God:

- Forgiveness of sin and the capability to develop a personal relationship with God Himself
- Entrance into the family of God with all rights as co-heirs with Jesus, including eternal life
- The indwelling Holy Spirit to teach, guide, and mold him/her into the likeness of Christ
- Specific spiritual gifts, given according to His wisdom and grace, for use in ministry

Secondary (locally established) prerequisites include:

- At least second grade and displaying an understanding of symbolism
- Attendance at a baptism class (parents attend with child) or discussion with youth leader
- **Approval of the parent/guardian if less than 18 years of age (consent form on lastpage)**

What To Expect

- When it is your turn to be baptized, you will enter the baptismal and sit while your testimony is played for the congregation. The pastor then will ask you questions regarding your decision to accept Christ. For example, "Mary, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?" and, "Is it your intention to live for Him for the rest of your life?"
- After you say "Yes," the pastor will say, based on your confession, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit." Do not worry, this is done quickly and you won't be under water long. Afterwards you can change and participate in the remainder of the service.
- Each person being baptized receives a Certificate of Baptism.
- **Special Note:** Baptisms may be performed by others who are Christians in addition to SMCC Church Staff; please include your choice when you sign up to be baptized.

What Should I Wear For My Baptism?

- Dark clothing, tee shirt and long shorts (or pants).
- A towel (you can change out of your wet clothes in the restrooms).
- You will want to bring something to hold your wet clothing in when you change.

We suggest that you wear your baptism clothing to the service and then change into street clothing following your baptism

Your Personal Story

As part of celebrating what God has done and is doing in your life, we will schedule an appointment to record a video story describing how and when you decided to trust Christ alone for your salvation. This will be done at the Baptism Orientation Class. It is helpful for you to articulate the difference Christ has made in your life so that you can confidently share that with others, and your faith community here at SMCC can support you in confidence as you are baptized.

After reading this document, please fill out the Baptism Form online, where you will be asked the following questions to help prepare for you video. Or, you can write out your answers on the following pages and bring it to the church office.

If you would like clarity, or further explanation related to the questions below, watch the message online: Sinner or Mistaker, by Pastor Paul Robie, from August 30, 2015.

1. What was your spiritual or religious background before you became a follower of Jesus? (Check all that apply)

- None (Can include atheist or agnostic)
- LDS
- FLDS
- Catholic
- Mainline Protestant (Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran etc.)
- Evangelical (Non denominational, Baptist, Calvary Chapel etc.)
- Other:

2. What did you believe about God, life and sin before you decided to trust in Jesus Christ?

3. What was it that convinced you that you are a sinner in need of a savior?

4. What convinced you that the Gospel message is true?

5. How was your life changed since becoming a Christian? (character, attitude, hope, peace, love, sense of purpose, fulfillment, etc. – has changed)

What changes do you see in yourself as a result of following Jesus (character, attitude, obedience, trust, love etc.)

Note: If registration is for a minor (under 18 years of age), please print and sign the consent form on the following page. Form must be received at the SMCC office one week prior to baptism.



MINOR CONSENT FORM

I am the parent/ guardian of _____, who is under 18 years of age. I fully understand and support the decision of the child named above to publicly declare their faith in Jesus Christ. I therefore, give permission for the child named above to be baptized by full water immersion to express their identity in Christ and intention to live for Him the rest of their lives.

Date _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian _____

Print Name of Parent or Legal Guardian _____

In addition to the above, I further understand that the SMCC Pastoral Staff requests a video recording of _____ to share his/her personal story of salvation with others. Therefore, I give my consent to an audio/video recording of my child and understand that the recording of his/her likeness will be used as a public broadcast and may be used in other formats, including possible posting on the SMCC website.

Date _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian _____

Print Name of Parent or Legal Guardian _____