


A resource by King's Community Church

The first step of following Jesus

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You may have read in the bible about people being baptised or seen people immersed in water during a church meeting. If you have, or are considering being baptised yourself, then you may have a few questions and we hope this booklet will help you find some answers.

### **What exactly is water baptism?**

The word 'baptise' in the bible translated literally means 'to plunge, dip or wash'. We usually baptise people in a baptistry (a small purpose-built pool) by immersing them briefly in the water. On the odd occasion where that is not safe or practical, we pour water over someone in order to drench them in it as much as possible.

### **Why get baptised?**

Jesus said to his disciples;

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

(Matthew 28:19-20).

They began to do that on the day of Pentecost when Peter proclaimed the gospel for the first time with the words: "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38

It is clear from Jesus' command and his disciples' practice that water baptism is a key part of making disciples. It is not something relevant or applicable only to a particular time or culture, rather we are expressly told to go into all nations and baptise people.

## **What does baptism in water mean?**

In one sense it's enough that Jesus, through the bible, commands us to be baptised, but it is also helpful to understand a little about what it actually means.

Basically, baptism is a wonderfully vivid picture of what has happened to us when we put our trust in Jesus for the very first time. When we get baptised we are identifying ourselves publicly with Jesus and his death and resurrection (Colossians 2:12, Romans 6:3). Just as Jesus went into the grave and came up again, so we go under the water and come up again to live a new life in him (Romans 6:4). Baptism also helpfully illustrates that through faith we have been washed clean of our sin (Acts 22:16).

## **What does baptism in water actually do?**

Water baptism does not make you a Christian. God does that by his Spirit when we respond in faith to the gospel. So what does baptism actually do?

It expresses in a vivid and powerful way what has happened to us. As we publicly identify ourselves with Jesus, it can begin or strengthen our own walk with God, while encouraging and challenging others. Most importantly though, it gives honour to God when we trust him enough to do what he says.

## **Who should get baptised?**

If you have put your trust in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour then you should get baptised at the earliest opportunity (Acts 8:36). We regularly baptise people on Sunday mornings so you won't have to wait too long.

In the meantime we usually like to catch up briefly beforehand to chat a bit about both the spiritual and practical aspects of baptism.

So basically it's simple, if you are a Christian, you should get baptised, but a couple of things can muddy the waters (so to speak) and so are worth mentioning...

### **What if I was christened as a baby?**

Some churches 'baptise' or christen babies and that may have been the case with you. While the bible clearly teaches that believers should get baptised, there does not seem to be a precedent for baptising infants before they can express personal faith.

Where whole households are said to be baptised, those same people are usually said to 'believe', to 'hear', or do something, so it is not just the automatic inclusion of babies (1 Corinthians 1:16, 1 Corinthians 16:15, Acts 16:32-33, Acts 18:8, John 4:53).

We would therefore encourage you to be baptised after you have believed, even if you were christened as a baby. We understand you may have questions about this and would be happy to talk with you more about it.

### **Should I put it off a bit longer?**

You may be tempted to put off being baptised until you have sorted out certain issues in your life. That can be a misunderstanding since we do not have to be good enough for baptism, rather being baptised is an admission that we have fallen short of God's goodness in our lives and want to receive his forgiveness.

Biblically it's actually after our baptism that we learn to put Jesus' teachings into practice. The condition of baptism is simply to be willing to do that, however difficult it may seem.

Another reason for putting off baptism might be that you are not ready to 'get serious' about following Jesus just yet.

That may well be a good reason not to be baptised as you are still counting the cost of discipleship but it would be unwise during that time to assume you have come to the point of saving faith. Rather it is an indication you are seriously considering trusting in Christ and all that that implies.

If that is the case then you might consider going on the Alpha course, or speaking with someone more about Jesus and the gospel.

### **What should I do if I want to be baptised?**

If you have not yet been baptised as a believer, and you would like to be, then you can get the ball rolling by speaking to your LIFE Group leaders or speaking to one of the welcome team.

You can also complete our online form:

 [kingsnorwich.com/baptism](https://kingsnorwich.com/baptism)

The next step is usually meeting up with someone from the church to talk a bit about baptism, share your testimony, and answer any questions you may have.

### **Practically what will happen when I get baptised?**

On the day there will usually be an opportunity for you to say what God has done in your life and why you are getting baptised. There is no pressure to talk for long and you might find it easier to write down what you want to say.

You will then walk down into the baptistry where you will be asked if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour. Assuming you say 'yes' the people baptising you will then say: "Therefore on confession of your faith, we baptise you in the name of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". They will then support you as you go briefly under the water and come back up again.

### **Go for it!**

If you want to be a follower of Jesus, he wants you to get baptised! While water baptism has not gone uncontested throughout the history of the church, nothing should now blunt, change or deflect the early proclamation of the gospel message, or exclude you from responding fully to the command: "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).



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