

## The Grace Place Statement Regarding Baptism

### Introduction

Baptism can be scary and mysterious for many people. That fear and lack of understanding may keep some from taking this important step. Grace Place recognizes the importance and value of water baptism and so we present the following biblical review of baptism for your consideration. It is our position that baptism is most appropriately administered through immersion to those who confess their belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Water baptism symbolizes and identifies believers with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-11). Baptism for the believer is a command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and a practice of the Church (Acts 2:38).

### Meaning of the Word

The word *baptize* comes from a Greek word which means *to dip or immerse* and pictures a sinking ship or the act of a blacksmith tempering hot iron by dipping it in water. Although no explicit command is given in Scripture regarding the proper mode of baptism, it is clear that immersion carries the concepts of baptism (death, burial, and resurrection) in a manner that is most meaningful.

**Various practices.** Other methods of baptism include *sprinkling* the head with water and *pouring* water over the head. Many times pouring and sprinkling are used with and for infant baptism. The Greek words for sprinkling or pouring were never used in connection with New Testament accounts of baptism nor is there any example of infant baptism.

**Infant baptism.** Grace Place does not practice infant baptism, however, we do conduct *Parent/Child Dedication* services. It provides an opportunity for parents to partner with God and the church to dedicate themselves to do everything they can to raise their child to intimately know, love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

While we practice baptism by immersion, we acknowledge that the most important issue is the belief in Christ rather than the method of baptism. The priority is the heart and the realization of why we should be baptized. Therefore, we recognize baptisms that were performed in a different manner as long as the believer made a conscious confession of faith in Jesus prior to baptism.

## **Age Requirement**

Though the Bible does not state a minimum age at which a person may be baptized, the believer should be old enough to understand the significance of baptism. At Grace Place we suggest children be 8 to 10 years of age for baptism. Determining the age when a child is too young can be subjective, varying with each child. To help provide balance our children and student ministries encourages baptism in cooperation with parents. The requirement is belief in Christ,

## **Importance of Baptism**

Beyond being commanded (Acts 2:38), baptism is important because it is a person's act of obedience which identifies him with Jesus. It is a demonstration (a public confession) that one has believed the good news and personally embraced Jesus as Lord and Savior. Scripturally when an individual came to belief, they were baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12; 10:48; 22:16). Jesus himself saw baptism as an act of obedience and was baptized (Matthew 3:15) even though he personally did not baptize anyone.

## **Baptism is Not Necessary for Salvation**

The act of baptism itself is symbolic and serves as an outward expression of the fact of one's salvation and the sign by which a believer enters into the covenant of grace. The action communicates clearly and effectively a public confession of one's belief. However, being baptized does not produce salvation. We are saved apart from works (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5).

Baptism is not necessary for salvation because the gospel is clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, based on the perfect life, atoning death and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ alone – plus nothing. Paul advocated this view when stating that “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” (1 Corinthians 1:17). Baptism is not a part of the gospel. Baptism then is the sign of our identification with Christ (John 20:31; Acts 10:43-48; 11:16-18; 13:38, 39; Romans 3:22; 4:9-11; 6:3-9).

Baptism doesn't make you a believer – it shows that you already believe. There is clear indication of individuals being saved before baptism (Acts 10:44-48).

***Often cited texts.*** Mark 16:16 is often cited as proof that baptism is necessary for salvation. “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.” (NASB) Notice the basis for condemnation is not the failure to be baptized, but the failure to believe. Baptism is the believer's confession of faith.

Acts 22:16 is the record of Ananias' words to Paul after he believed. “...Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” (NASB) The structure of the sentence ties the washing away of sins to calling on his name, not baptism.

1 Peter 3:21 is part of a larger discussion of the Old Testament story of the deliverance of Noah's family and salvation through Jesus (vv.18-22). Peter states that the water of the flood judgment was representative of water baptism – the copy or representation of the Old Testament deliverance from judgment (v. 21). How does baptism "save?" It is not the external washing away of dirt, but it relates to the conscience. When the text says, "baptism saves us," consider the context of the passage. It would be easy to reach a faulty conclusion when ignoring context. The text says, that salvation comes "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." In the proclamation of the gospel, salvation from sin and its punishment is announced through Jesus' death and resurrection.

### **Baptism at Grace Place**

At Grace Place our baptism celebrations are joyful times for the church to come together and rejoice with those who are making their public profession of belief in Jesus. There is nothing to be scared of or apprehensive about.

**Timing.** Baptismal services are held at various times of the year. Since it is not the act of baptism that saves, it is not necessary that one be baptized at the moment of belief. Baptism may take place at anytime after the point one makes their confession of faith and commitment to Christ.

While Grace Place pastors often perform baptisms, it is not necessary that a pastor conduct the actual baptism. There is no biblical mandate that baptisms be performed by pastors. Baptisms may be performed by the one who is responsible for leading an individual to Christ, parent(s), or others who have had an impact on the individual's decision to become a disciple of Christ. However, we ask that all baptisms be done with the knowledge of and under the supervision of a local Grace Place pastor.

**Rebaptism.** What about rebaptism? Generally rebaptism is not required, but it is sometimes appropriate for reasons such as those who lack confidence in their initial baptismal experience because they don't remember it, they were coerced, or their decision was made apart from their personal faith in Jesus.

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior but have not been baptized, you are invited to talk with one of the Grace Place pastors about taking that step. Before the baptism service you will be asked to meet together with a pastor and others taking the same step for a brief orientation and review of why baptism is important and its meaning. You too will be briefed on the ceremony itself. Everything possible will be done to make sure you are comfortable and ready for your baptism.

For additional information regarding baptism contact the church office (970) 532-9886.

