

Baptism

One of the most difficult decisions some people ever face is to be baptised. It is not always easy to understand why. The struggle beforehand may arise from the fear of what others will think, spiritual opposition from Satan, or concern about the cost of wholehearted commitment to Christ. For others, however, baptism is simply the natural next step of obedience as they choose to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Preparation

Careful preparation of each baptismal candidate is necessary. Our aim is make disciples who genuinely love Jesus Christ, acknowledge Him as Lord, and are committed to following Him wholeheartedly. People following Jesus glorifies God John 15:8.

Candidates for baptism need to:

1. Have repented of sin and have a personal trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Should understand what Biblical baptism means, so teaching, questioning them and explanation of the meaning of baptism is important. Romans ch 6 is a good chapter to teach from.
3. Seek to normally have a personal, disciplined daily time with the Lord where they spend time in prayer and meditation upon the Scriptures.
4. Have a personal testimony which gives credibility to their faith.
5. Be of an age whereby they have some understanding of what they are doing.

Points to note

Children and younger people who have committed their lives to the Lord should receive the consent of their parents, especially if the parents are pre-believers. This should also apply to a marriage partner, where the spouse is a pre-believer. To ignore this principle could very easily invoke needless hostility, while on the other hand, when pre-believers give their consent, it may in time lead to their conversion. Most often consent is given even if the baptism is delayed for a few weeks or months.

As a pastor do not be coerced into giving your consent for someone to be baptised if you feel that the candidate is unprepared or has wrong motives. Time will determine how serious they are in this matter.

Biblically the pastor is not the only person qualified to baptise people. By encouraging Home Group leaders and others to baptise, they will respect you for it and find personal satisfaction in ministry. It is especially helpful for someone to pray publicly for the person getting baptised either before or immediately after the baptism.

Some people have a chronic fear of water. If after receiving personal ministry for fear and it remains, do not get legalistic as to the mode of baptism: would Jesus? Consider having them stand in a pool of water and pour a bucket or a glass of water over them.

Women need to be careful about what they wear when they get baptised as wet clothes are very easy to see through. Bathers (or togs) under a dress are satisfactory.

Should people get baptised a second time? A few may want that especially if they were very young when first baptised or were pre-believers. Occasionally, I will reluctantly rebaptise them if it will help them grow in the Lord.

The Baptismal Service

The candidate should invite their pre-Christian and Christian friends to the Baptismal Service. Some churches print special invitations inviting people to attend. Having pre-Christians at the service can prove to be a very worthwhile evangelistic opportunity.

Baptismal services should, wherever possible, be held in a public setting (unless doing so would expose the candidate to significant persecution). An important aspect of baptism is the believer's public declaration of faith, openly confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Keep the ceremony as authentic and natural as possible. At the first baptismal service I officiated in, I wore a ministerial gown and chest waders, hopefully never again! The waders were awkward and cumbersome, while the gown made the occasion feel unnecessarily formal and unnatural. There is no biblical indication that John the Baptist or the Apostle Paul wore special ceremonial clothing when baptising believers. The focus should be on the person publicly identifying with Christ, not on religious attire or ritual. Simplicity often reflects the spirit of the New Testament more faithfully.

It is useful to share Scripture outlining the purpose of baptism and to allow the candidate to share their testimony. Their baptism must be in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

'Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit' Matthew 28:19.

Over the next week or so after the baptisms, it is particularly important that someone keeps in close personal contact with those recently baptised. Sometimes they can experience an emotional low, or strong Satanic opposition, as Jesus did after His baptism (Matthew 4:1ff).

It is a wonderful joy to make disciples for Jesus, especially when they take this important step of baptism.

Extra teaching

My baptism study found on my website: https://ministrywithpurpose.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/baptism.web-a4.dox_.pdf