

**Faith Christian Fellowship of Tucson**  
**Real Disciples Guide**

**3: Baptism is Not a Suggestion**

Christian groups have many different, but sincere, beliefs about water baptism. No matter what your organization, **water baptism is not optional**. It doesn't save you, but it is the first step in a life of discipleship. It is your place of public identification with Jesus Christ. You are immersed into His death and raised with His life. Baptism is the specific action that corresponds to your faith in what He has done for you. It is your moment of identification with the finished work of Jesus Christ.

**Three Big Ideas to Remember:**

1. **Baptism is part of discipleship.** Jesus commanded the Apostles to "...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," then teach them His commands. Baptism marks a step of commitment. There is no discipleship without commitment. The early church never separated believing from being baptized. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." For the people in that day, it was all one act of believing: Love and marriage, horse and carriage, thunder and lightning, Believesth and is baptized. Take time to look at these examples in the New Testament: Matthew 28:19-20 / Mark 16:16/ Acts 2:38 /Acts 2:41 / Acts 8:12 / Acts 8:35-36 / Acts 22:16 / Acts 9:18 / Acts 10:47-48 / Acts 16:14-15 / Acts 16:33 / Acts 18:8 / Acts 19:4-5
2. **Baptism is not just a symbol.** According to Peter, baptism is, first of all, "the answer of a good conscience toward God (I Peter 3:21)." It is the first step in a lifestyle of obedience: If you won't obey Him in this simple thing, how will you obey Him when you face life's difficult choices? The faith-filled step of water baptism has spiritual power and personal significance:
  - I identify with Him in His death and resurrection: old person buried, new person raised. I offer my body to Him for service. Romans 6:3-4, 11, 16-19
  - It is my personal moment of being marked as a covenant member. It is the New Testament answer to physical circumcision. It marks the circumcision of the heart. Colossians 2:11-12 / Romans 2:28-29 / Philippians 3:3
  - I put on Christ. The term means to put on a cloak or a robe. My new coat marks me as a son of God, a member of the family of God, endowed with a new identity. My relationship to God will never again be based on performance, but on blood. Gal 3: 26-29 / Luke 15:21-24
3. **How do we do it?** We have instruction and example in the New Testament:
  - Water baptism comes as quickly after salvation as it can be arranged. Acts 8:36-37
  - When at all possible, it should be done by immersion in water. (Death, burial, resurrection) Acts 8:38-39. The New Testament people understood the word to mean immersion in water marking their entry into new life. They did it right away.
  - There is no requirement for who must perform it, or any formula given for what must be said. The important thing is what you believe as you obey the Lord. It is the heart of the one being baptized that is important to God.

**Somebody Said:** Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers." - Max Lucado

**Here's the Point:** Every believer should be baptized. It's a first step in a life-long commitment to follow Jesus. It's not the minister or the "formula" that impacts your life, it is what you believe as you act on your faith. You are circumcised in heart, raised with Christ in power, and identified with Him as a child of God.

**Action Steps:** If you've not been baptized since you believed, spend time reading these scriptures to build your faith. Call your church to see when you can be baptized. As you go, say something like this:

*I present myself for baptism, believing that Jesus is alive from the dead, and confessing that He is my Lord. I come expecting to receive from God. My heart cries out, Lord, I died with You and I believe that You now empower me to live with You in newness of life by the same Holy Spirit glory that raised You from the dead. My heart is circumcised, forever marking me as belonging to You. I put on my new identity in Christ – the new man created in righteousness and true holiness. I am a son, not a slave. In this act I present myself to You, every part of my body is yours to use in the service of your kingdom. Here am I. Lord, send me!*

To obtain a copy of Pastor's book "Water Baptism," visit [our website](#).