



Baptism Class

Overview and Statement of Faith

Water baptism is only intended for those who have decided to follow Jesus in word and deed. It is an outward proclamation of an inner transformation. In obedience to what Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19 believers are baptized by water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Baptism is like our wedding day. It is not when we fall in love with Jesus and decide to spend our life following Him, but rather, it is when we outwardly profess that love within the context of a body that will help us walk out our new life in faith. There are many in our context that misunderstand the biblical reason for baptism, and because of that we want to make sure we explain it the best we can. It is the first step in demonstrating a commitment to Christ lived out in a commitment to Christ's church.

The Gospel and Doctrine of Salvation

The gospel is the lens that we view our lives through. It reminds us that we were created by God as good, to image Him in all that we do, resulting in human flourishing and His glorification. Sin entered the world and broke that relationship, and in the fullness of time God himself sent Jesus to set it right. At The Garden, our definition of the gospel is: While we were dead in our sins, God's kingdom was proclaimed on earth through Jesus, who: Loved us to make us lovely. Died for us that we might live. Rose from the dead and released us on mission to reclaim the hearts of all who would have faith to believe what He has done. To respond to the gospel we simply: Believe it. Repent (or turn away) from our sins and, Receive the Holy Spirit. The 3 questions below, can be

answered in this paragraph, and will continually give you the ability to share the gospel with others.

Why am I here?

What went wrong?

How can the world be set right?

What is Baptism?

Baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of invisible grace. They are discernible and tangible representations of both the invisible realities of the gospel and the Spirit's application of this gospel to our lives.

Through both ordinances, believers "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion are pictures of Christ's death and resurrection, and through our participation, we identify our union to Him in faith. As we enter the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we, too, have died to the old self to live for Christ.

The Garden Church Statement of Faith describes baptism as a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ, much in the same way that marriage is a visual and symbolic demonstration of our union with our spouse. It is not where we profess our love, but where we publicly proclaim that love with a group who are walking out life with us. We demonstrate our union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. Baptism signifies that a former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts the release from the mastery of Satan, sin, and death.

As a symbol, baptism illustrates four significant realities:

1. Christ's death and resurrection.
2. The disciple's union with Christ in His death and resurrection.
3. The new life in which a disciple walks.
4. Cleansing and washing away of sin

Is Baptism Merely a Symbol?

Within the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries, the nature of the sacraments was fiercely debated, even between the various Reformers. Without attempting to justify any position, it is important to assert that baptism is in some mysterious sense a “means of grace,” in which God sanctifies and encourages His people. That said, it is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism is not and does not do:

1. **BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE.** Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, it is not saving grace but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized.
2. **BAPTISM IS NOT “NECESSARY” FOR SALVATION.** Without diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must warn against the doctrine which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

How Should a Person Be Baptized?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling, The Garden Church practices baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following considerations:

1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge, or immerse.
2. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion.
3. The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.

Where Should a Person Be baptized?

Although there are no prescriptions in the Scriptures to location, we prefer to practice the ordinance within the context of the local church which allows the congregation to celebrate together in a person's act of obedience and submission.

That said, we do not want to prescribe what the Scriptures do not, and thus we do allow for baptism to occur outside the weekly gathering. Our preference in such cases is that video and/or pictures be taken to record the event so that the church can share in the joy.

Who Can Perform Baptism?

The Bible gives no prescription for the requirements to perform baptism. Contrary to some traditions, there seems to be no biblical reason to restrict the duty to men who have been ordained to vocational ministry. Therefore, we allow any believer, male or female, who has faithfully obeyed the ordinance of baptism to perform the ordinance of baptism.

Share Your Story

We want all believers who are being baptized to share their stories with the church.

Why share my story?

Your story is a tangible way to proclaim the good news (gospel) of Jesus.

1. It's a way to remind yourself of your new identity in Christ. Often our identity as a Christian is under attack because of our continued struggle with sin. Your story is a great tool to battle against the lies that you aren't really loved by God. It is a reminder of God's loving mercy toward you.

2. To defend your faith and provide hope to a broken world. Your story is a way for the world to hear the good news of Jesus.

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” —1 Peter 3:15

3. To overcome evil. It is a verbal declaration of truth against the lies of Satan. *“And they*

have conquered the accuser by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” —Revelation 12:11

How do I write my story?

The BEFORE. How would you describe your life before Jesus (at least 100-200 Words)

The MOMENT or the PROCESS. For some people it was instantaneous and for others the Lord brought them along a process of placing their faith in Him. What did God do in you? How did He do it? Who did He use? (at least 100-200 Words)

The AFTER or the NOW. What’s different in you? How does this affect the rest of your life? What’s next? How is God using you? What is He producing in you? (at least 100-200 Words)

OTHER NOTES

1. Be brief. Please do not allow your testimony to be more than a page. Allow this testimony to take root in you so that if God places you in a situation to give someone hope, you can do so in a timely manner. We like to think of it as your “elevator story”. It is how you can tell of the good news of Jesus before that person walks away.

2. Be descriptive in your struggles, not your timeline. We want to experience what God has delivered you from, but we don’t need unnecessary details of dates and historical data. Details invite people into a deeper connection and helps us resonate with the authentic you.

3. Make sure Jesus is the hero. It’s easy for us to make ourselves look really good. This moment is about Him. It’s about the work of Christ and how He has rescued you. Tell us about his wondrous works!

In summary your story should be written in this format:

THE BEFORE | How would you describe your life before Jesus? (at least 100-200 Words)

The MOMENT or the PROCESS | For some people it was instantaneous and for others the Lord brought them along a process of placing their faith in Him. What did God do in you? How did He do it? Who did He use? (at least 100-200 Words)
(Remember the gospel is: 1. You were sinful and fully deserving the wrath of God, 2. Christ died in your place on the cross taking the wrath of God toward you on himself, 3. We receive the grace of God and forgiveness of our sins through faith and repentance. When we believe and receive all that Jesus has done, God sees us as he sees Jesus.)

The AFTER or the NOW | What's different in you? How does this affect the rest of your life? What's next? How is God using you? What is He producing in you? (at least 100-200 Words)

BAPTISM DAY

Who would you like to baptize you and what is your relationship to them?

In baptism we want to tell two stories. First, how the Lord saved you, and second, how the Lord uses people to bring us to faith. With that in mind we would love for someone who played a major role in you coming to faith in Jesus to be the person who does your baptism. If you are a child or a teenager, we would really like for you to consider the role your parents played in you coming to faith in Jesus.

What is the email address and phone number of the person baptizing you?

We will send you both some details leading up to the day of your baptism. Please let us know how we can contact them.

What is your t-shirt size? *

YM

YL

S

M

L

XL

2XL

3XL

What is the t-shirt size of the person baptizing you? *

YM

YL

S

M

L

XL

2XL

3XL

Please write your answers and your story on another page or fill out the Baptism form online at <https://www.thegardenchurchtx.com/baptism> and click the “share your story link at the bottom.

By signing my name, I affirm that I have put my faith in Jesus Christ, and I trust Him for my salvation.
