

Introduction

We at Indian Creek Christian Church are excited about the interest you have shown in being baptized. We would like to help you during this important process. Our hope is to provide you with a tool to discover God's plan of salvation for your life. This guide is divided into three sections:

- **The Creek's View on Baptism**

This material is our biblical understanding of the act of baptism. If you wish for more information, you will find a baptism link on our website that includes all of this material, a lesson by Dr. Gary Johnson on baptism, and answers to frequently asked questions regarding baptism (www.thecreek.org).

- **Student Bible Study**

Designed to answer questions regarding baptism for people 18 and under, the student bible study can be a starting point for students and adults alike. Adults may use this as their introduction to baptism, and students should use it as their primary study. Parents are advised to first work through both studies on baptism, and then lead their child through the student study.

- **Adult Bible Study**

This study is for adults desiring to know more about baptism or for parents of students who are considering baptism. We would like for you to take some time and fully understand baptism according to God's Word.

At any time if you have questions, please feel free to contact one of our ministers at The Creek office at 862-6430. Specific contacts are:

Adults: Shan Caldwell, Minister of Assimilation
Grades 9-12: Shawn Case, Executive Minister of Student & Children's Ministries
Grades 5-8: Mike Killebrew, Associate Minister of Middle School Ministry
Children: Jason Hills, Director of Worship for Student and Children's Ministries *

* Please read the recommendation of the elders of Indian Creek Christian Church regarding the baptism of children, found on page 2.

The Creek's View on Baptism

Baptism is a positive command. Depending on whom you ask you will hear dozens of different traditions, teachings and opinions about the subject of baptism. Even though there are multiple opinions, there is only one truth that really matters—the truth revealed in the Bible. On the authority, subject, action and design, the Scriptures are plain. The Creek strives to model itself in accordance with the Scriptures. Please read the following statements for clarity on our understanding of baptism.

Who should be baptized?

All believers are candidates for baptism. Christ said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Anyone who is willing to repent of their sins, and confess their belief in Jesus, should be baptized. (Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38-39)

How should we be baptized?

To understand how we should be baptized is best determined by looking at the meaning of the word. The Greeks had, and still have, a word for **immerse**, one for **sprinkle**, and one for **pour**. **Baptizo** means dip or immerse, **rantizo** means to sprinkle, and **cheo** means to pour. This is now the meaning of these words in Greek, and was also the meaning when Christ was on earth. The Holy Scripture consistently uses the word baptizo, which means “immerse.”

The Apostle Paul states that baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. We are buried with Christ by baptism (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). At The Creek we baptize people by immersing them in water. This act symbolizes, according to the teaching of scripture, the burial of the old self and the resurrection of a new life with Christ.

When should we be baptized?

A person should be baptized at the time he or she trusts in Christ. The Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), moreover in the New Testament church, a person's baptism was always the first expression of faith, not separate from it. So baptism was not just a memorial of faith, but was intended to offer a means of union with Christ and a benchmark of transformation, marking the place and time a person made a commitment to Christ (Romans 6:1-8). At The Creek we ask a person to be baptized at the point that he or she is ready to make a commitment to Christ.

As well, the Bible clearly teaches that a person should be baptized when he or she is capable of 1) believing in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior, and 2) when the individual is capable of repenting of sin. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Jesus clearly indicates that a candidate for baptism must first have the capability of believing in Him. Moreover, in Acts 2:38, Peter preached that an individual must repent and be baptized. He clearly indicates that a candidate for baptism must first have the capability of repenting of sin. The word for “repent” in the New Testament means “to change the mind.” A candidate for baptism must believe that Jesus alone can save a person from sin, and intentionally decide to “change the mind” (i.e., repent) about sinful behavior.

Clearly, that helps us understand that little children are not likely candidates to be baptized. Young children may not have the intellectual development that enables them to believe that Jesus alone saves them from sin, and to conscientiously turn away from sinful behavior. Because the commitment of baptism requires a more adult level of cognitive and developmental readiness, **the elders recommend that children be at least 10 years old to be baptized**. Proverbs 20:25 issues a significant caution against the danger of making a vow before adequate knowledge, forethought, and reflection have been given. In an effort to prevent young people from making a premature commitment that they may not fully understand, this minimum age has been recommended.

Why should we be baptized?

As commanded by Christ, every believer should be baptized. It is essential to becoming a Christ follower (Matthew 28:19). Furthermore, through baptism we are following Christ's example (Matthew 3:13-17), accepting forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), expressing trust in Christ (Acts 8:12-13), and testifying to God's work in our lives (Romans 6:1-8, Galatians 3:27).

The Holy Spirit prompts individuals to recognize their sin and guilt, and the only way in which the human soul can be wiped clean of sin is through the blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:27-10:7). This "washing away" of sin is most clearly symbolized in the act of baptism (Acts 22:16). Peter, the apostle, makes this powerful statement. "... baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21 NASB) Every believer should be baptized. It is essential to becoming a Christ follower. It is essential to salvation.

Since one of the biggest obstacles between God and man is human pride, baptism also offers a venue by which believers humble themselves before God and others, and admit their need for Christ's redemption (James 4:6). In addition, baptism meets a God-given human need for expression. Baptism is the scriptural expression of faith in Christ.

The act of baptism alone cannot save an individual. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We are saved only through accepting Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Baptism is the point in time when we receive the benefits of our faith, the blessings of salvation, and the forgiveness of our sins. Those who were never baptized by immersion but were sprinkled for baptism as infants rest in God's merciful hands. We hope that Jesus will say to any person who has truly submitted to Him but was not taught about immersion, "Your faith has saved you." Yet someone who understands Christ's command to be immersed and refuses to obey should not consider himself to have submitted to Christ.

Every biblical example of baptism is by immersion. That is why we turn the matter over to God. Anyone sprinkled as an infant should be grateful that their parents cared about their spiritual condition, but there comes a time to personally claim the faith yourself, and immersion is the appointed means.

Should a person ever be rebaptized?

Any person who has trusted in Jesus as the only Son of God and who has willingly been immersed into Christ may become a member of The Creek whether the baptism occurred at The Creek or elsewhere. Rebaptism is allowed for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism experience because they don't remember it, they were coerced, or their heart was not right with God at the time. Anyone who has fallen into sin after having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but rebaptism is not necessary (Acts 8:13-24).

Must a person be baptized during a worship service?

No. In fact, the biblical model was "immediately" (Acts 8:38, 16:33), yet baptisms during worship services are encouraged at The Creek because they provide the opportunity to testify to your faith and show humility.

Summary statement

Paul exhorts all believers to unite, for we are all of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). Regardless of our particular beliefs regarding the mode of baptism, it is important for all Christians to seek unity as representatives of Christ's body. We believe the source of unity is the truth of God's Word, and we pray that baptism will be a place of unity, not division, among believers (John 17:17-21).

Student Baptism Study

Take time to read and investigate the following points. The fill-in-the-blank sections correspond with the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible. If you don't have an NIV Bible, you can still read along in your own Bible. An answer key is available at the end of this study guide to provide any fill-in-the-blanks to which you cannot immediately discover an answer.

1. GOD CREATED . . .

- Space, Earth, Trees, Water, Animals, EVERYTHING!

- Name some other things God created:

1.

2.

3.

- _____ created you just like an artist painting a masterpiece!

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

WORKMANSHIP means a work of art.

You are God's work of art.

God made you because He _____ you and has great plans for your life!

- Read Genesis 1:28-31

God saw all that He had made and it was _____.

In fact it was perfect

Until...

2. SIN ruined God's perfect creation.

- Read James 4:17
Sin: Choosing to disobey what you know God would want you to do.
- God hates _____ so much that he cannot be around it.

Is there any food that makes you sick? For some people they hate a food so much they can't even stand the smell of it! They have to get it out of the room. That's how God is with sin. He is so pure he cannot even stand for sin to be in his presence.

Habakkuk 1:13 says that God's eyes are too pure to even look on sin.

- Sin is an attitude & an action
Sin is 100% rotten.
God is 100% pure.

3. Who has sinned?

- "For all have sinned and fall short of God's glory." Romans 3:23

Does that mean...

1. A few people have sinned?
2. Nobody has sinned?
3. Everybody has sinned?

_____ has disobeyed God's good rules. EVERYBODY

- Can you name a specific time when you sinned against God and broke one of His rules? _____
- Read Matthew 5:48

How good would a person have to be to live with God in heaven?

Have you always lived your life that way? _____

- Read Romans 6:23

What are wages? _____

Because of our sin we have earned _____

- So let's break it down

God hates _____.

God loves _____.

All people have sinned.

Some people think that if they are good enough, they can erase the sin in their life.

Some people think that if they pray enough, they can erase the sin in their life.

But nothing we do is enough to erase the sin in our lives because the sin is too big.

No one could ever be _____ to be with God because _____ of us have broken God's rules at some time.

4. God looked down from heaven and saw that we could *never* get rid of the sin in our lives. We could *never* get to heaven on our own. So He created a way.

- Read again Romans 6:23.

What does the second part of that verse say? _____

What do you think eternal life is?

Eternal life is living forever in _____ with _____.

- Read John 3:36

Who gets to live forever with God?

- Read Philippians 3:20

What does the Bible call the place of eternal life? _____

- Read Revelation 21:1-5 and John 14:2

What is heaven like?

Jesus is preparing a place for each of his believers.

5. JESUS is the way we get the gift of eternal life!

- God loves us so much that he wants to give us a gift through_____.
- Since we couldn't get to God, God came to us in the form of a baby born in a town called Bethlehem.
- The baby's name was _____.
He was 100% God and 100% human all at the same time.
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.
Jesus paid the wages of your sin with His death so you can receive God's gift of eternal life with Him!

That's what Jesus did for you!

- Jesus did NOTHING wrong – no sin at all.

You have done some wrong things.

Jesus took your punishment when He died on the cross.

Why? Because He loves you!

- What Jesus did for us is called GRACE.
Grace is when someone does something for you that you don't _____.
- Read 1 John 2:1-2
Who did Jesus buy eternal life for? _____

6. To accept God's gift you have to

- BELIEVE
Believe that Jesus is God's Son and he died to pay the price for your sins.
- REPENT
Repenting is making a u-turn away from sin and toward Jesus.
- CONFESS
Let people know that Jesus has saved you and that you are making him the boss of your life, your LORD!
- BE BAPTIZED
Be baptized to obey Christ's command, to accept forgiveness of your sins, to receive the Holy Spirit, to show trust in Jesus, and to show others God's work in you life.

Jesus has given us a very special way to accept Him and to show others that we are making Him our Lord. It's called _____

Baptism is the way the Bible teaches us to show God, yourself and everyone else that you are CHOOSING to make Jesus the King of your heart.

- Read Acts 2:38, 8:36, 9:18.
In the book of Acts, when someone wanted to accept Jesus as their Lord, the Bible says they were _____.
- Now read Romans 6:4.
Just like Jesus died and rose again to a new life, your old self and its sins are gone and you are a brand new person!

It's not because of what happens on the outside, but because of God's forgiveness of your _____!

If you don't CHOOSE Jesus in your heart, baptism is just getting wet. Check out Romans 10:9!

- Read Romans 6:1-2
Once you confess that Jesus is the King of your life and are immersed, you are forgiven. Does that mean you can just keep sinning? _____

Now you spend the rest of your life learning to live like God's Child, a kid of the King! Each day as a Christian you can grow to be more like Jesus.

- List some things you might do that would help you to be more like Jesus (Remember, they don't get you into Heaven – that's the free gift of grace.)

For we are God's WORKMANSHIP, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

As you grow to be like Jesus, God is painting an awesome picture with your life.

Adult Baptism Study

Even though there are multiple opinions regarding baptism, there is only one truth that really matters—the truth revealed in the Bible. This study guide is designed to guide you through a personal discovery of what the Bible says about baptism and its role in your life, your relationship with Jesus, your involvement in the Church and your hope of eternal life.

Take time to read and investigate the following points. The fill-in-the-blank sections correspond with the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible. If you don't have an NIV Bible, you can still read along in your own Bible. An answer key is available at the end of this study guide to provide any fill-in-the-blanks to which you cannot immediately discover an answer.

1. God created everything, including you.

- Read Genesis 1.
In Genesis 1:31, God looked at all that He had made, and it was _____.
- Psalm 139:13-14 says, “I praise you because I am fearfully and _____ made; your _____ are wonderful, I know that full well.”
- How does it make you feel to know that you were created by God and are special to him?

2. Sin entered the world and ruined the perfection of God's creation.

- Read Genesis 2:16-17.
What did God tell Adam that he could do?

- What did God command Adam not to do? Why?

- Read Genesis 3:6-8.
Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate of the fruit. What did they realize?
What did they do?

Adam and Eve had been in a perfect relationship with God, but when they sinned, they were separated from Him. Instinctively, they realized this and hid in shame. If you read the rest of Genesis 3, you will see that God sent them out the garden of Eden. They could no longer live freely in His presence.

Why does God take such a harsh view of sin? If God is loving, why couldn't He just ignore Adam and Eve's sin?

- Habakkuk 1:13 describes God this way: “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.”
- 1 John 1:5 says “God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.”
- It is contrary to God’s nature to sin or to tolerate the presence of sin. As much as He loves us (His creation), He cannot have a relationship with us, because of our sin.

3. Everyone has sinned. Because God is just, He cannot leave those sins unpunished.

- Adam and Eve aren’t the only ones who have sinned. What does Romans 3:23 say? “For have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- What is sin? Sin is choosing to disobey God. Read what James 4:17 says about sin.

Think of a time you did not do the good you knew you ought to do. If you feel comfortable, describe it below.

Most of us instinctively realize that sin brings consequences. If you speed, you may get a ticket. If you rob a bank and are caught, you will go to jail. What does the Bible say is the consequence of sin?

- Read Romans 6:23
According to this verse, what “wages” are we to receive for sin? _____

Remember what God told Adam in Genesis 2:17? Death and separation from God are the natural consequences of sin, because God’s holy nature cannot be in the presence of sin.

Because of our sin, we have all earned the “wages” of death.

- God is perfect, holy, and just. Isaiah 13:11 says, “I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their _____.”

4. But God is also merciful, and wants to restore our relationship with Him. He knows we cannot do this on our own.

- Read Romans 6:23 again.
We already discussed that the wages of sin is death. But what, according to this verse, is the gift of God? _____

This verse perfectly captures the way in which God is both just and merciful. He is wholly just. He is righteous. He cannot just “ignore” sin. But He is also wholly merciful, and wants to provide a way for us to be in a relationship with Him.

- Look at Romans 6:23 one more time. According to this verse, what have we earned?
_____ What can we be given? _____

Many people believe that if the good things they do outweigh the bad things, then they can get to heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth. No “good” thing we do can ever erase or outweigh our sin. The only wage we can earn on our own is death.

Read Isaiah 64:6.

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our _____
_____ are like _____.”

This verse clearly tells us that even the best things we do (our “righteous acts”) are like “filthy rags” compared to God’s holiness. Have you ever had a piece of cloth that you thought was white, until you put it up against another that was pure white, and suddenly your cloth looked gray and grubby? We don’t just look grubby, we look “filthy” next to God’s pure holiness.

Why do you think so many people try to “earn” their way into heaven?

5. God has given us a way to be forgiven and have eternal life, and that way is through Jesus Christ.

- Remember the first passage we studied, in Genesis 1. God created the world and every person in it. Before Adam and Eve’s sin, God looked at creation and called it “very good.”
- Read John 3:16. “For God _____ the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Even after the sin of Adam, Eve, and the rest of humankind, God still loved the world so much to send His one and only Son, Jesus, so that we could have eternal life.

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.
Who is the “him” this verse refers to? _____

This passage tells us that Jesus had no sin. He is the one exception to the rule that all have sinned. He was born and lived on earth. He was fully human, and at the same time, fully God. He “knew no sin.” Because of this, only He could die and pay the price for our sins. Because of this, and only because of this, we can receive the gift God’s righteousness and eternal life.

- Read Ephesians 2:8-9.
This gift of God is called _____.
We receive this gift through _____.

- Romans 3:22 says, “The righteousness from God comes through _____ in Jesus Christ to all who _____.”

6. God has shown us clearly how to accept this gift.

A gift is worthless unless it is received. God offers His gift of grace freely to all people, but not everyone choose to accept the gift.

- In order to accept the gift, you must _____ that _____ is God’s _____.

Earlier you read John 3:16. Go back and read John 3:16-18. In order to accept God’s gift, we must believe that the gift exists, and that it is found in Jesus who lived a sinless life (2 Corinthians 5:21), died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), and that He was raised back to life (Acts 2:24).

- You also need to _____ according to Acts 3:19. Repentance is more than just saying “I’m sorry.” To “repent” means to turn away from a life full of sin, and turn toward God.
- Then, you “_____ with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’” (Romans 10:9). In other words, you must be willing to acknowledge in front of other people that you are putting Jesus in charge of your life.
- Finally, you can be baptized (Acts 2:38, 8:36, 9:18). In the early church, when someone came to believe in Jesus and accept his gift of grace, that person was baptized. We follow the same practice today.

The water in the baptistery has no special powers. If you don’t believe in Jesus and accept his gift of grace, then baptism is nothing more than getting wet. But being baptized is clearly what the New Testament teaches believers to do when they come to a place of faith in Jesus.

7. God calls us to live our lives in grateful response to his gift of grace.

- Nothing that you do either before or after you are baptized earns your salvation. Ephesians 2:8, 9 says “For it is by _____ that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the _____ of God - not by _____ so that no one can boast.”
- That same passage tells us how God wishes us to live once we have accepted His grace. Read Ephesians 2:10. “We are God’s _____, created in Christ Jesus to do _____, which God has prepared in advance for us to do.”

- Some people think that grace gives them a “free pass” to continue sinning. But Romans 6:1-4 clearly shows the error of this thinking.

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that _____ may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were _____ into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a _____.”

God has offered forgiveness of our sins not only so that we may have eternal life, but so that our lives on earth can be transformed, too.

ANSWER KEY

The bulleted answers correspond to blanks under each section in the studies.

Student Study

1. God created . . .
 - God, loves
 - good

2. Sin ruined God's perfect creation
 - sin

3. Who has sinned?
 - everybody
 - perfect all the time; no
 - something you work for, something you earn, like an allowance; death
 - sin; people; good enough; all

4. God looked down from Heaven and saw that we could *never* get rid of sin in our lives.
 - The gift of God is eternal life; heaven; God
 - anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior
 - Heaven
 - It will be beautiful, God lives with us. There will be no tears, no death, no pain. Everything will be new. It is the best place ever.

5. Jesus is the way we get the gift of eternal life!
 - Jesus
 - Jesus
 - deserve
 - me; the whole world

6. To accept God's gift you have to
 - baptism
 - baptized
 - sins
 - no

Adult Study

1. God created everything, including you.
 - very good
 - wonderfully, works

2. Sin entered the world and ruined God's perfect creation.
 - eat from any tree in the garden
 - eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because you will surely die
 - Their eyes were opened, they realized they were naked. They clothed themselves with fig leaves, and hid from God.