

What is water baptism?

How does it actually work? Why is it more than a random tradition? Why do Christians do it? Who started it? And why would you consider getting baptized? Let's get to all that. But maybe not in that order.

Who started water baptism?

Why start with who? Because actions are motivated by intentions and intentions are often motivated by identity. So with that, who started water baptism?

Baptism as it exists in Christianity was made popular by John the Baptist. John was Jesus' cousin who was known for speaking to crowds and telling anyone who'd listen that times were changing, a Savior was coming, and people better get ready. One of the ways he led people to prepare was through the symbolic act of water baptism. [The book of Matthew says](#) it was John's actions that were foretold hundreds of years earlier when the book of Isaiah recorded:

Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!" [Isaiah 40:3 NLT](#)

Isaiah 40 is considered by many Bible scholars to be messianic prophecy. This basically means it's a Scripture from before Jesus' birth (by several centuries in this case) that talks about the coming of a Messiah, or Savior. The term "the Lord" in verse three is the term that was used for God, but also in reference to the coming Savior—God's Son, Jesus. According to these scholars, the "someone shouting" is John the Baptist.

What does all this mean? **Proclaiming Jesus and preparing the way for Him was not only John's intention, it was part of his identity long before he was in the womb.** Also, spoiler alert: John is the one who later got to baptize Jesus. But that wasn't the first time they were in water together. John had been in the womb about six months when Jesus' mother, Mary, found out she was also pregnant. Not long after that, John's mother, Elizabeth, met up with Jesus' mother, Mary, and John jumped in the womb. Then, before Mary could break the news that she was pregnant, Elizabeth excitedly declared:

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" [Luke 1:42-45 NIV](#)

John the Baptist, the "who" behind baptism, was all about proclaiming Jesus to people and clearing the way for Jesus. Even in the womb!

Why do Jesus followers make a big deal of water baptism?

If John is the "who" behind water baptism, then his life can tell us about the "why" of baptism: proclaiming Jesus to people and clearing the way for Him. More specifically, proclaiming Jesus as the leader of your life while providing a moment for others to see a picture of the freedom and joy that Jesus offers. Okay, so how exactly does baptism accomplish this?

1. Following Jesus is doing what Jesus did, and Jesus got baptized. This one is pretty simple. If we're going to be Jesus followers, then we should [do what Jesus did](#) and get baptized.

2. Following Jesus is doing what Jesus says. Also simple. [Jesus told us to baptize people](#). We want to proclaim Jesus as our leader, so out of our love we obey Him and do what He asks.

3. Following Jesus is showing Jesus to people. Baptism is this incredible reenactment of what Jesus did for us. [As He went into the grave, we go into the water](#), as He was raised back to life, we come back out. Our broken souls and wrong living are healed and washed away by Him; the water [doesn't actually wash off dirt](#), but symbolizes the healing and washing that He has done and will do in our lives. At Stone Creek Church, we believe it's Jesus who does the washing, not the water. This bold public symbol shows off what only Jesus can do.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. [Romans 6:4 ESV](#)

And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. [1 Peter 3:21 NLT](#)

[Here's more of what the Bible says about baptism.](#)

How does water baptism actually work?

There are lots of variations of baptism that Christians from different traditions practice, and this is not about trying to clear all that up. Rather, we want you to know how we practice baptism. At SCC, we believe baptism is for people who are able to make their own conscious decision to follow Jesus with their life. At our church, we make baptism available several times throughout the year and invite people to sign up to be baptized. When you sign up, a pastor reaches out to you to learn more about your decision and answer any questions you may have. The day of we have a short meeting to make sure everyone understands the importance of baptism and the commitment to Jesus they're going public with.

At our church, water baptism looks like this:

- People who are going to be baptized often invite many of their family and friends to be part of this fun celebration. As with all of our services, everyone is welcome.
- Each participant enters the baptism pool and is baptized one at time by a pastor who briefly, carefully, lowers them into the water and lifts them back up. [Similar to how John baptized Jesus.](#)
- There's a lot of fun cheering and clapping, and just a tangible sense of joy in the room.
- There are other simple logistics and details involved, but these are the main pieces.

Some reasons people think about getting baptized:

If you're reading this and you're wondering if you should get baptized, then hopefully some of these reasons will be helpful as you make your personal decision to go public with your faith.

You've decided to follow Jesus but you've never been baptized. As we said earlier, we don't believe baptism is a requirement of knowing and following Jesus, but it's something He asked us to do. If you've committed to follow Jesus and you haven't yet been baptized, then now is a great time to think about taking that next step.

You were baptized but you didn't make the decision yourself. Sometimes people who were baptized as infants, or when the decision wasn't theirs to make, decide they'd like to get baptized again, this time by declaring their own intention to make Jesus known.

You got baptized but it was a while ago or at another church. Baptism isn't something you need to keep doing. It's a one-time public declaration of your faith. But that doesn't need to stop you from sharing your faith every day in other ways. Also, here's more about [what to do after baptism](#).

So what then?

Water baptism is a symbolic and powerful way to show who God made you to be by doing what Jesus asked you to do.

Water baptism was made known by someone whose God-given identity was to proclaim Jesus to people and clear a way for Him. Did you know that if you're a Jesus follower you have that same identity? Before Jesus went back to be with God, His father, He shared these words for His followers:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. ..." [Matthew 28:19-20 NIV](#)

Water baptism is a symbolic and powerful way to be who God made you to be by doing what Jesus asked you to do. Are you ready?