



Baptism

at The Austin Stone

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

BAPTISM AT THE AUSTIN STONE

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HOW THE AUSTIN STONE PRACTICES BAPTISM

CORPORATE BAPTISM

We highly value the ordinance of baptism at the Austin Stone. As a corporate church, we baptize believers at our campuses. For information about these baptisms and the required baptism class, please email your Campus Connections Director (austinstone.org/campuses).

We encourage believers to also get baptized in their missional communities. Included in this booklet is a guide for how you can baptize as a missional community. We also encourage anyone getting baptized in their missional community to take a baptism class at one of our campuses.

BAPTISM IN MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES

The Austin Stone Community Church is a network of missional communities – *you* are the church. Missional communities worship Christ together, live in community, get trained for ministry, and make disciples together. These communities are the primary way to connect with others at The Austin Stone and pursue a life on mission. One joy of living on mission together as a missional community is celebrating new life in Christ through baptism.

We understand that some missional community leaders, while excited to shepherd their group through baptism, may have some hesitation at doing it “correctly.” So we wanted to encourage you by giving you some guidelines and instruction on how to lead and facilitate baptism in community. In the following pages you will find biblical teaching on baptism, answers to some

frequently asked questions concerning baptism, and with some suggested logistics for performing baptisms within your missional community.

What are some of your questions about baptism?

WHAT THE AUSTIN STONE BELIEVES ABOUT BAPTISM

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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 6:3–4)

Having been buried with him [Christ] in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

Every time a person enters into a new life with Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us that all of heaven rejoices.¹ Baptism is an outward proclamation of an inward reality that God has created new life within that person. Baptism is the new believer's testimony to the public of his belonging to Jesus. As he is immersed beneath the waters, he is proclaiming that his old self, enslaved to unbelief and sin, has died. And as the believer is raised up out of the waters, he is proclaiming that his new self, freed from sin and death, has been raised in the resurrection of Jesus. He is proclaiming that he now belongs to Jesus.

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE?

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. (Matthew 3:13, 16–17)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19–20)

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... ” (Acts 2:38)

We baptize because Jesus modeled it himself and made it part of His ministry and part of our mission. Simply put, we baptize because Jesus commanded us to; however, there is also purpose and wisdom in that command. Baptism provides a decisive, public way of taking a stand that Jesus has saved you, that you’re crazy about Him, and that you’re going to follow Him all the days of your life.

“Sadly, the church has substituted all sorts of things for baptism: ‘Stand up if you have decided to follow Jesus.’ ‘Come down the aisle and meet me here in front.’ ‘Pray this prayer with me.’ ‘Sign this pledge card.’ Or perhaps worst of all: ‘Every head bowed and every eye closed. If you have accepted Jesus as your savior, just look up at me. I’ll see that and know that you are going to spend eternity in heaven.’”²

We’re probably all familiar with these statements. They’re sometimes called “invitations” or “altar calls.” When you look for an altar call in the Bible, there is really no clear example of something like this. What we do see as a clear example of a decisive, public way of proclaiming that you are now a Christian is baptism.

Essentially, you are publicly proclaiming three things in Baptism:

TO GOD

Thank You for saving me. I'm Yours. Help me to live a life that shows Jesus to the world.

TO BELIEVERS

Celebrate with me! Jesus has saved me! Remember when He saved you? Encourage me, help me, and keep me accountable to following Jesus.

TO UNBELIEVERS

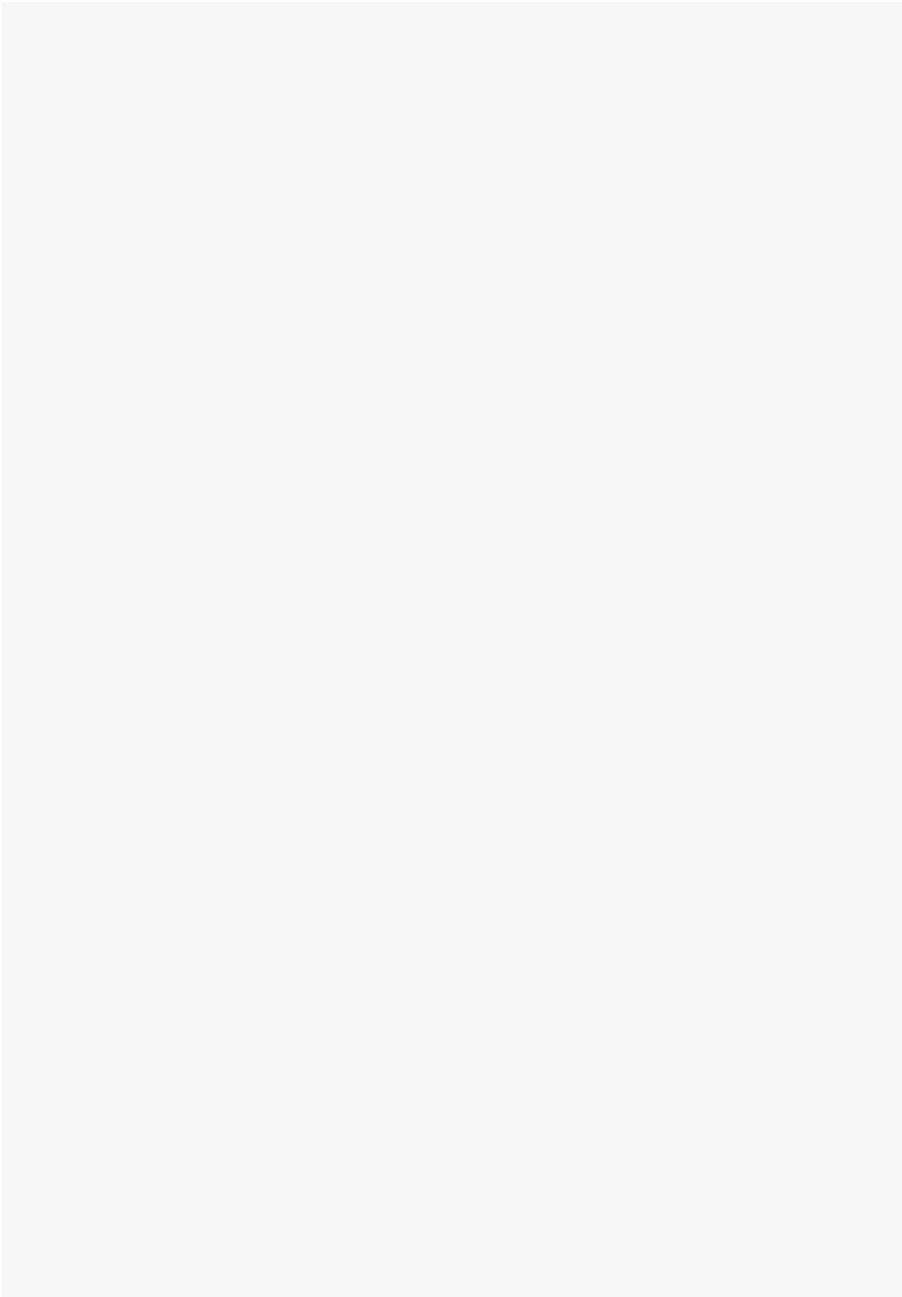
I want you to know the Jesus that I know. If you see any change in my life, if you see anything good in my life, it's not me- it's Him! He wants you to know Him.

PROCESSING QUESTIONS:

Why do you want to get baptized?

Who are you going to invite to your baptism?

What do you want your baptism to say to others?



THE PRACTICALS OF BAPTISM

WHAT DOES BAPTISM LOOK LIKE?

And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:5)

And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. (Mark 1:10)

John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized... . (John 3:23)

We believe that a physical submersion into the water is the best way to show the death and burial of the old self and that a physical emersion from the water best represents the new self being raised from the dead.

“All agree that water is the element of baptism. But the debate ensues regarding how water should be applied. Some prefer to sprinkle with water in light of a handful of biblical texts that mention being sprinkled with clean water.³ Others prefer pouring, to symbolize the Spirit poured out in new-covenant blessing.⁴ Still others prefer to immerse in water. We believe that the Bible clearly teaches baptism by immersion. It is the only mode associated with baptism in the Bible and the only mode that expresses the meaning of baptism as shown in passages such as Romans 6:1–10... .”⁵

The word *baptism* in the Greek means dip or immerse. Going “into the water”⁶ and “coming up out of the water”⁷ are the common biblical language associated with baptism. Baptism by immersion was the universal practice of the early church.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 3:3)

And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36–38)

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27, NASB)

Baptism is an outward proclamation of faith, and is therefore only for believers. Our understanding of the Bible is that every baptism in the New Testament was preceded by confession of sin and repentance, which is something that neither an unbeliever nor an infant can do. Because baptism represents a union with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we believe only in baptism of believers.

In light of this, we encourage everyone that was “baptized” as a baby or those that believe they were baptized before they were actually Christian to be “re-baptized.”

We understand that not everyone will agree with our view of biblical baptism. If you have a conviction that infant baptism is biblical and valid, our elders would like to talk with you. Please contact your Campus Pastor (austinstone.org/campuses).

For anyone who is unsure about what he believes about baptism, we recommend further reading and studying on the matter.⁸ We can provide resources to assist you in your search of the Scriptures.

DOES BAPTISM SAVE YOU?

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8–10)

We are saved solely by God's grace applied to us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Nothing we do can save us... our salvation is not a result of our works. We are, however, called to do good works and obey the commands of Jesus, baptism being one of them. So like all the other "good works," we baptize and are baptized not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Just because a Christian is not yet baptized doesn't mean he isn't a Christian. Baptism is an outward demonstration of what has already occurred inside of us. Similarly, if my wife is not wearing her wedding ring, she's still married. The ring is simply an outward display that she's married. Nevertheless, I'm glad that she wears her wedding ring. We believe that, though baptism doesn't save you, God is pleased when His child proclaims to the world that the salvation of Christ has come into his life.

PROCESSING QUESTIONS:

What do you believe about baptism?

What is difficult for you to believe?

Has this changed as you have studied the Scriptures?

HOSPITALITY & COMMUNICATION: PRACTICAL STEPS

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:8–10)

Within your missional community, set aside time to talk about baptism – what it is, why we do it and what it looks like. Encourage people who wish to be baptized to meet with a leader one-on-one to discuss why they want to get baptized and what their understanding of baptism is. Learn their story and hear their heart. Ask them who they want to baptize them. Do not be intimidated if you are asked to baptize someone. Find strength in the story of John baptizing the Son of God (Matthew 3:13–17), and be encouraged by the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20).

Baptism is a cause for celebration; make it a party! A potluck, a picnic, a barbeque – whatever fits your missional community. Create a special environment for the people who are dying to their old selves and being made alive in Christ! Invite your missional community, friends and the family of the people getting baptized. Get the word out through emails, phone calls, Facebook, Twitter and word-of-mouth. Invite both Christian and unbelieving friends to share in the day! This is an amazing opportunity for unbelievers to better understand what Jesus has done through His death and resurrection.

After the event, share your stories on social networking sites and with us, The Austin Stone. We would like to post stories of missional community baptism on our blogs to celebrate these life transformations and to encourage other missional communities. You can email our Story Team at stories@austinstone.org.

PROCESSING QUESTIONS:

Why are you excited to celebrate baptism in your missional community?
How do you think doing this together will grow or bless your community?

LOGISTICS OF PERFORMING A BAPTISM: PRACTICAL STEPS

Witnessing someone begin his or her new life in Christ is a beautiful thing! Here are some baptism logistics that will help you feel comfortable and ensure the baptism is truly a joyful experience.

- » Organize or delegate food & drinks (this is a great task for someone with the gifts of hospitality &/or administration).
- » Bring an iPod & speakers OR a friend & a guitar.
- » Invite friends & family!
- » Wear a dark shirt and shorts over a bathing suit.
- » Bring a towel.
- » Bring a change of clothes.
- » Consider presenting those getting baptized with a gift from your group. A Bible and REAP journal make a great gift for a baptism.

Have a time of fellowship and prayer before and after the baptism to give thanks for God's mercy and grace. In the Great Commission, Jesus commands his disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19) The Austin Stone baptizes obeying this command. Here is wording and instruction that can be used during baptism:

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Buried with Christ [immerse in water],

Raised to walk in new life [emerge from water].

Here is a useful process for the actual physical immersion in water:

- » Both baptizer and baptizee get into water.
- » Baptizer stands to one side of baptizee, usually the baptizee's left.
- » Either one or both of you can share with the group why the baptizee is getting baptized.
- » The baptizee plugs nose and puts other hand on chest or arm.
- » Baptizer puts one hand on the baptizee's back and the other on his arm or chest.
- » Baptizer should hold baptizee as he/she is dunked.
- » Baptizee needs to bend at the knees and also go backwards to be dunked. Make sure to bend knees and not keep them locked.
- » As baptizer is dunking, repeat the statement above.
- » Bring baptizee up out of the water and celebrate the baptism!
- » (Talk through this process beforehand, so that each person knows what to expect.)

VENUES

Performing baptisms in public areas is a great opportunity to live on mission in the city of Austin. It invites onlookers to stop and witness the transition from death to life, from darkness to light, from hopelessness to hopefulness, from slavery in sin to slavery to God.

Any community, neighborhood, or personal pool of someone in your missional community will do, but here is a list of some places around Austin with access to a large water source for baptism.

Auditorium Shores

920 W. Riverside Drive
Austin, TX 78704
Central / South

Walsh Boat Landing

1600 Scenic Dr.
Austin, TX 78703
Central

Barton Springs Pool

2201 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX 78746
Central / South

Commons Ford Park

614 N. Commons Ford Road
Austin, TX 78733
West

The Quarries

11400 N MO-Pac
Austin, TX 78759
North

Selma Hughes Park

11921 Selma Hughes Park Rd.
Austin, TX 78732
West

NEXT STEPS

The Austin Stone wants to support you and your missional community with your celebration of baptism.

Here are some contacts for your use.

- » Contact your Campus Connections Director with any question or concerns about baptism.
(austinstone.org/campuses)
- » Send baptism stories, videos and pictures to
stories@austinstone.org.

We encourage you to joyfully celebrate baptisms within your missional community as you make disciples in our city, and we support you taking this next step in your ministry!

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
(Matthew 16:24–25)*

REAP EXERCISES FOR THOSE GETTING BAPTIZED

REAP EXERCISES

REAP (Read, Examine, Apply, Pray) through the following passages and see what God's word has to say about your identity in Christ, and why baptism is such a powerful message to the world. Along with each passage, there are questions to consider.

Romans 6:1–14

- » How are Christians joined with Christ?
- » Why are Christians joined with Christ?
- » By what power was Christ raised from the dead?
- » What does this passage say about Christ's life after death?
- » What did you learn about your identity in Christ?
- » What did you learn about baptism in this passage?

Colossians 2:9–15

- » What does this passage say about the Christian's relation to sin?
- » What does this passage say about faith?
- » What did Christ accomplish? What does it mean for Christians?
- » What are the two parts of baptism? What do they represent?

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT BAPTISM

TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT BAPTISM

As your child grows and matures and is around followers of Christ, they are likely to start asking many questions about baptism and what it means. Here are some simple ways to talk about and explain baptism with your kids and hopefully facilitate discussion for your family.

First off, it is important for your child to understand that baptism is a picture of what it means to believe in Jesus Christ who died and rose again. It is something that is supposed to remind us of what Jesus has done for us. It represents something that has already happened in our hearts as we believed the gospel, placed our trust in Jesus for our salvation, and were brought spiritually from death to life.

Here is some language that may be helpful as a guide as you talk with your child about baptism:

Baptism happens one time in a person's life, when we first put our trust in Jesus. However, we get to rejoice and celebrate with others for the rest of our lives as we see people get baptized. Baptism is an outward moving picture of what Christ has done in our hearts. When someone gets baptized, he or she is dipped under the water and then immediately raised back up. When one is dipped completely under the water, it is a picture of someone so close to Jesus that Jesus' death on the cross has now become their death. This means that as one is going under the surface of the water, he sees that his sin was paid for when Jesus took his place by dying on the cross. He also realizes that he has died and no longer lives on his own. Being under the water symbolizes be-

ing buried. That is why you will often hear someone say, “Buried with Christ.”

Now when a person is baptized, he or she does not stay under water for long, they immediately come back up. This is to remind us that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we are raised from the dead with Him. We have been given new life because Jesus paid for our sin and when He rose from the dead He showed us that He completely dealt with sin. That is why when a person is coming up out of the water, you will often hear someone say, “Raised to walk in the newness of life.” We have a new life in Christ. It is no longer us who live but Christ who lives in us. Sin does not have control anymore. You will also notice that a person is soaking wet when they come up out of the water. This is also a picture of the cleansing of sin that happens when we are in a relationship with Christ. Baptism is a picture of how we are united with Christ in His death and in His resurrection.

It is important to make sure that your child understands that being baptized does not save them. It is just a picture of an inward spiritual change that has already occurred. People get baptized because Jesus told us to do so in order that we could show the world our commitment to Christ. And everyone else gets to rejoice and worship, remembering what Christ has done for them. That is why we cheer. Baptism is more than just watching someone get wet, it a worship experience where we get to remember the greatest event in human history, the cross and resurrection!

Scripture References: Matthew 3:13–17, Romans 6:1–11, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 2:11–15

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD WANTS TO BE BAPTIZED

Be sure to teach your child what baptism is and why we do it. *(Please see the handout on “Talking with your child about Baptism”).*

Baptism should be your child’s idea, not your idea.

Sometimes suggesting baptism to your child means that they will only say yes because they want to please you.

Be sure your child understands the gospel.

Even though they do not understand all the implications of the gospel, be sure they understand that Jesus is the only way they can be saved – not good works, not church, not by behaving well.

Is there evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in your child’s life?

Do you see any fruit of the spirit? (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - Galatians 5) We want to make sure that this is not just mere religious obedience for approval. If you are not sure, it is okay to wait. Remember baptism does not save your child; it is just an outward expression of what God has done.

To wait or not to wait? That is the question.

There is not a set age or time that we feel is right for a child to be baptized. That is up to you as your child’s parents and spiritual leader. But it is okay to wait. Some prefer to wait until they see more fruit in their child’s life.

Some want to wait until they know the child is old enough to remember their baptism. Waiting also allows for the child to embrace and understand the commitments they are making as their own. Some want to baptize their child as soon as they know they are believers. All are okay options. Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus and a testimony of what he has done. It is NOT a saving act. So waiting a little while cannot hurt your child.

If your child can articulate what Jesus has done for them and you have seen fruit in their lives and you and your spouse feel the time is right, then it sounds like your child is ready for baptism. You can do this in front of the church or in your missional community. Let us know what you decide so that we can help spread the word of the Lord's faithfulness.

Signing up for baptism.

A child that is mature enough to be baptized should also be mature enough to go through the same process for baptism as adults. Please see the "Practicals" section of this booklet or contact your Campus Connections Director.

NOTES

- 1 Luke 15:7
- 2 Vintage Church by Driscoll & Breshears: pg.119
- 3 Ezek. 36:25; Titus 3:5-6; Heb. 9:13-14, 19; 10:22.
- 4 Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; 10:45; Rom. 5:5.
- 5 Vintage Church by Driscoll & Breshears: pg.119-120.
- 6 Acts 8:37-38
- 7 Mark 1:10
- 8 For further study: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/infant-baptism-and-the-new-covenant-community>



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