

### Our Covenant

As a bond of unity among us, Berean Baptist Church accepts for its members the following covenant:

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and upon our profession of our faith in Him, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we do now solemnly and joyfully enter into this covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We fully realize that the strength to uphold this covenant comes from the grace of God our Father, the shed blood of God the Son, and the power of the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

We promise to actively pursue personal holiness; to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church's spiritual growth and unity; to faithfully abide by the doctrines and behaviors outlined in this church's Articles of Faith; and to give cheerfully of our time, talents, and finances for the support of this ministry and its missionaries.

We further promise to faithfully attend the church's worship services, to maintain personal spiritual disciplines; to teach our children the Word of God; to share the gospel with our relatives and acquaintances; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements; and to avoid all gossip. We promise that we will love and pray for each other and in times of distress help one another.

We promise to endeavor to obey the commandments of our Lord Jesus and to abstain from anything that would cause our fellow brother or sister in Christ to stumble or that will bring reproach to the name of Jesus Christ.

We further realize that if we should fail to live up to the promises we have made, our brothers and sisters in Christ will always strive for our reconciliation and spiritual restoration. However, if we partake in a sustained and unrepentant violation of an Article of Faith, we will be brought under church discipline in accordance with the Church Constitution.

We make this covenant with each other for the express purpose of glorifying God as the visible representation of the body of Christ.

# BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

## BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH



517 Glensford Drive  
Fayetteville, NC 28314  
910.868.5156 | [bbcfnc.org](http://bbcfnc.org)

Name:





This booklet is for those looking to understand believer's baptism. It will highlight for you some of the foundational truths of baptism that we believe here at Berean. If you still have questions about believer's baptism after completing this booklet, please reach out to one of the pastors or elders.

Once you have completed this booklet and you are ready to be baptized, please call the church office at 910-868-5156 to sign up for a baptism interview with a pastor or elder. You will turn this booklet in to your interviewer as a guide for the discussion during the interview.

Before you get started, you will need a Bible and a pen or pencil. There is no need to complete this booklet all in one sitting—take breaks and be sure to pray for guidance as you complete it.

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## Definition of Baptism

In the New Testament (NT), the Greek word for “baptism” is derived from a root word that means to immerse or submerge. Here is the Strong’s Greek definition of baptism, found on Blue Letter Bible’s website:

**βαπτίζω** *baptízō*, bap-tid'-zo; from a derivative of G911; to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: —Baptist, baptize, wash.

The New Testament is full of examples of baptism and instructions for believers to be baptized after the model provided by Jesus’s own baptism in the Gospels (Mat 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34). In fact, “baptize” or “baptism” appears about 90 times in the New Testament in various forms.

Jesus Himself was baptized by immersion in the Jordan River. Christ’s baptism is the model and pattern for all believers to follow. For this reason, we practice baptism by immersion in water, except in those extremely rare cases in which immersive baptism is physically or medically impossible. In such cases we will accommodate to the best of our ability in conformity to Scripture.

By definition, baptism must be by immersion. Therefore, sprinkling or pouring water over someone does not adhere to the instruction found in Scripture and does not constitute believer’s baptism.

## What is the Meaning of Believer’s Baptism?

For Berean, baptism is a celebration of the mighty work God has done in the hearts and lives of people who have been brought to faith in Christ. Therefore, baptism is only for believers—those who believe in the sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross as payment for their sins and who confess Him as Savior and Lord. Baptism is the public declaration of that inner belief. We rejoice in this testimony as the fruit of salvation. What a wonderful event to be celebrated with the Berean family!

After becoming a believer and follower of Christ, believer’s baptism is a step of faith and a public display of inward change. Berean requires that church members have been baptized by immersion after placing faith in Christ. We do not do this out of Baptist tradition, but in submission to what Jesus commands in Scripture. The remainder of this booklet will explore key points in the definition of baptism in light of related passages of Scripture.

Parents are the most important disciple-makers of their children. They cannot *make* a child believe and their own faith does not constitute the child's faith. Each person is accountable for their own decisions (see Deu 24:16; Eze 18:1-32; 33:10-20; John 12:37, 47-50). It is the parent's responsibility to create an environment where the child can hear the Gospel and be encouraged toward belief in Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, a child will begin to see and understand sin in their life as they grow and mature. It is only through the Spirit's work that a child will realize their sinfulness and need for a savior and place their faith in Christ. At that point, the child must make the decision for him or herself to follow Jesus and be baptized. Believer's baptism, then, is not a choice a parent can make **for** a child. Rather, it is the parent's God-given duty to raise the child in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4) and to pray that the Holy Spirit would bring the child to belief and salvation.

Parents are welcome to publicly dedicate themselves to raising their children in accordance with Scripture and to request accountability from the Berean family in doing so. It is good for parents to publicly declare "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Jos 24:15). Child dedications at Berean are public professions of parents and the Berean family that we will all commit ourselves to help and guide the child toward belief in Christ.

However, infants and toddlers will not be baptized. This is because we believe Scripture teaches that baptism is an act of obedience once someone has surrendered their life to Jesus. This is impossible for an infant or toddler to do.

Please read Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

9. This passage of the OT is referred to as the *Shema*, and is central to Jewish belief. This is what Jesus is quoting from as He answers that the most important command is to love God. What does this passage say to parents?

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Please read Matthew 28:16-20.

1. Write below what Jesus says about baptism in v.19.

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We have a Triune God. This means that, while one in nature and essence, God exists as three distinct Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is overtly referenced in Scripture and all three Persons are witnessed together in the baptism of Jesus (God the Son):

*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mat 3:16-17).*

2. How is each Person of the Trinity depicted in the account of Jesus' baptism?

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For this reason, we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in acknowledgment of God's Trinity. We immerse in water as a celebration of the cleansing Christ provided through His life, death, burial, and resurrection.

We believe that believer's baptism is one of the two ordinances that Jesus gave to His church. Webster defines the word "ordinance" as: "Established rite or ceremony. In this sense, baptism and the Lord's supper are denominated ordinances." God has directed believers to participate in both ordinances.

### What Baptism is Not

By taking a look at what baptism is **not**, hopefully you will gain a greater understanding of what we believe about baptism.

As previously mentioned, we see **baptism as an ordinance, not a sacrament**. The Roman Catholic Church, views baptism as a **sacrament**, which means that a person will receive grace from God if they are baptized. We see grace as a free gift to those who have faith in Christ. Thus, there is nothing we can do to receive more grace, including baptism.

**Baptism is not a precondition of salvation.** We are saved by faith alone, so we do not have a checklist before salvation.

Please read Acts 9:1-19.

3. Paul was a violent opponent of all who followed Jesus. What caused him to go from being such a violent opponent to receiving baptism?

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**Baptism is not a means of salvation.** As stated above, salvation is by faith alone. A person is not saved when they get baptized.

Please read Ephesians 2:8-10.

4. In verse 9, what is stated about salvation?

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**Baptism is not a work people can do to achieve salvation.** It is an act of faithful obedience that comes after salvation. In Mark's Great Commission passage, Jesus closely links belief and baptism, but makes a clear delineation that baptism itself does not remove condemnation.

Please read Mark 16:14-20.

5. From verse 16, who are condemned?

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Jesus highlights that those who believe and are baptized are saved. Being baptized in and of itself does not bring salvation. But since Jesus linked it so closely in this verse and commands it in the Great Commission, we should obey.

## Appendix A: A Word About Repentance

When you study the words "**repent**" and "**repentance**" in the New Testament, you quickly find that there isn't just one simple definition. The words "repent," "repented," and "repentance" show up 56 times in the ESV New Testament. For comparison, the word "believe" in its different forms appears 249 times. We can look at a few examples to understand how "**repent**" is used before and after salvation.

Mark 6:12 says, "So they went out and proclaimed that people should **repent**." What does this mean? Remember, context is very important. We must look at the verses around verse 12 to determine what Mark is describing. In verse 6, we read that Jesus was amazed at His listeners' lack of belief. In this context, **repenting** means turning from being an unbeliever to believing in who Christ is and what He was doing on earth at that time. "**Repent**" is often an imperative in Scripture, a command (something you must do) to turn away from your unbelief and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Now consider Acts 2:38, where Peter tells this audience, "**Repent** and be baptized every one of you in the..." In this verse, Peter is speaking to Jews who were responsible for Jesus' death. They did not believe Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah, God's Chosen One), and they killed God's Son. Killing God's Son was a grave sin. They needed to admit their role in his death and realize they needed forgiveness. In this context, **repenting** includes recognizing that they killed the Christ, acknowledging their need for forgiveness, and understanding that this forgiveness comes only through faith in Christ's death for their sin, His burial, and resurrection.

Next, look at Revelation 9:21, which says, "Nor did they **repent** of their murders or their sorceries..." Here, **repentance** is very specific. A person is sinning, and they must stop. While this verse mentions murder, repentance doesn't have to be about something that extreme. For example, I must **repent** if I am often selfish or ungrateful. **Repentance** is about recognizing that my actions are wrong and need to change.

Anyone who does not believe that Jesus died for their sins must **repent** and turn to Jesus in faith. Christians also **repent**. When they sin, they confess their disobedience to God and work with the Holy Spirit to stop sinning. As you can now see, **repentance** does not have a simple definition.

Complete the three statements below by adding a few sentences to each of the three outlined areas. You may also type your response and bring a printed copy with you to your interview. During your baptism interview, the pastor/elder will help you refine your salvation testimony using your responses below.

Before salvation, my life was... and my thoughts of God were...

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I came to believe in Jesus as my Savior and Lord around..., God was working in my life...

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Since my salvation, I am seeing God transform me in Christlikeness through... and these are some things that are new and different...

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Baptism does **not** wash away our sin. Our sin is washed away by the blood of Jesus.

Please read Ephesians 1:7-10.

6. From verse 7, what brings us redemption and forgiveness because of Jesus' grace?

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The water in baptism does nothing special to us. Water is used as a visible display of the cleansing work of the blood of Jesus. It is a representation of a person's old, sinful nature being buried with Christ in His death and the new life given to the believer in Christ.

Baptism is **not** for infants. Notice how we refer to it as *believer's* baptism. This will be explained in the next section.

Some would say that baptism is *not* necessary for a believer, which we would disagree with. As previously stated, baptism does not accomplish salvation. However, it *is* an action expected of a believer after salvation (Mat 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16). Therefore, it is the believer's responsibility to obey Jesus's instruction for His disciples to be baptized and to follow the model the early Church established in baptizing new believers.

Baptism is not for those who have already died. We disagree with all the teachings of the Mormon Church (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) concerning baptism. Their teaching on baptism for eternal life and baptism and baptism for the dead are nowhere supported in Scripture and are false teachings. (Consider the Apostle Paul's words on the matter in 1 Corinthians 15:29).

## Who Should Participate in Believer's Baptism?

We believe that only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation should be baptized. We get this from Christ, who commanded us to make disciples and to "baptize them..." (Mat 28:19). The pronoun "them", here, refers to disciples. Disciples are men and women who have trusted in Jesus for their salvation and are committed to following Jesus as their Lord. Therefore, believers are the only ones the Church is to baptize as a public profession of their faith in the Christ.

Please read Acts 10:44-48.

7. As Peter is talking with this group of new believers, what does he tell them?

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We would say that believer's baptism should be one of the first steps as a disciple of Jesus. This is in keeping with the earliest practices of the Church as we have seen in the book of Acts.

Please read Acts Chapter 2.

8. What elements in Peter's sermon did the Jews respond to that led them to believe and be baptized?

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## 16. Why do you want to be baptized at Berean Baptist Church?

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## My Salvation Testimony

Since believer's baptism is a public profession that Jesus is your Savior and Lord, being able to share your salvation testimony is critically important. This final section will help you clearly summarize your salvation testimony so that you can share it at any point God provides you with an opportunity.

As the Great Commission commands us to make disciples, understanding the Gospel within God's Story is absolutely necessary. This understanding provides an opportunity for faith and for people to believe in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. So, part of being a disciple who makes disciples is listening to the life stories of others and then telling them your story and how it connects with God's story. When you tell people how God saved you, and is transforming you, people will take notice. This can help them to understand that they also need Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Sharing your salvation testimony helps people see that you now have a personal relationship with the Creator God of the universe. Here are some keys to keep in mind as you write out your testimony below. Stick to the point and just share the main points. Be specific, share feelings, thoughts, events, that will help people to visualize your story. Be truthful, do not exaggerate, the work of the Holy Spirit in your life is powerful enough; do not feel like you need to make it a bigger miracle.

At Berean, we encourage believers to include three parts in their salvation testimony:

- Life before salvation.
- How you came to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- Christlike transformation since salvation; how is the Holy Spirit working in your life now?

14. What is your understanding of baptism?

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15. Why do you feel the need to be baptized?

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Order matters. A study of baptism in the NT reveals that baptism *always* follows repentance and conversion (belief). Before Jesus' baptism, in the beginning of Matthew 3, John the Baptist boldly urged people to repent and be baptized as a sign of repentance (turning away from sin and toward God). The Apostle Peter did the same in Acts 2:38. Furthermore, Jesus Himself commissions **all** His disciples to not only make disciples but to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mat 28:19). Here, Jesus Himself gives us the appropriate order of operations: make disciples and then baptize them. So, baptism follows belief. It is also important to understand that this command means no believer should remain *un-baptized*.

Please read Acts 2:36.

10. In this passage, Peter is sharing the Gospel, and around 3,000 people surrender to Jesus as Savior. In verse 41, what does Luke say happened next?

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Once these 3,000 believed in Jesus as Savior, they were baptized, and then joined the other believers in living out their faith in Jesus as Lord. Verses 42-47 paint a picture of the NT Church, where followers of Jesus *are* the Church. At Berean, we also strongly believe that church membership is important. Every believer needs to be an active part of a Gospel community. Ask the church office or the pastor/elder conducting your baptism interview about becoming a member of Berean. You will need to pick up and walk through our "Steps Before First Class" booklet. This booklet will help you understand who we are and where God may use you as part of the Berean family.

If you reach a point in life where you realize that you have not followed the Lord in believer's baptism, please, **stop and obey**. This is the moment you should choose to receive believer's baptism.

## What is the Proper Mode of Baptism?

Please read Romans 6:1-4.

11. In this passage, how does Paul link baptism and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

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Candidates for baptism will enter the water and become fully submerged, representing being buried with Christ. Then, being raised from the water, the believer symbolizes Christ's resurrection and the new life He has given to the believer. To baptize by any other means would be to downplay the penal, substitutionary, atoning work Jesus accomplished on the cross; His death for our life.

According to Hebrews 9:22, there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. There is no other way for sin to be dealt with. Jesus—the spotless Lamb of God—had to offer Himself up as a sacrifice in place of sinners so that the wrath of God toward sin would be satisfied. This is the essence of penal substitutionary atonement—Jesus's death on our behalf purchased life in Him for those who believe (Gen 3:15, Isa 52:13-53:12; Rom 5:12-6:4).

Baptism, then, symbolizes this exchange. The believer is buried with Christ in death, having his or her sins completely paid for, and in exchange is given new life in Christ. What a glorious truth we get to celebrate in baptism!

## What if I do Not Feel Like being Baptized?

As we stated before, baptism does not accomplish salvation. So, a person can certainly believe and be saved without believer's baptism. However, they are not being obedient to Jesus. They are living in disobedience. Some of the reasons people do not feel like they need to be baptized are: ignorance, pride, apathy, defiance, and false conversion. Do any apply to you?

Please read Luke 6:46-49.

12. In your own words, please describe the point Jesus is making with this illustration.

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A reluctance to be baptized needs to be examined. Jesus makes clear that those who follow Him obey Him. If we do not do what He has commanded us, can we truly say He is the Lord of our life?

## How do I get Baptized at Berean?

At Berean, candidates for baptism must complete this booklet and then be interviewed by one of the pastors or elders.

If you need to be baptized in obedience to the commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, please call the church at 910-868-5156 or let any deacon, elder, or pastor know before or after any worship service.

13. What size of adult t-shirt do you wear?  2XL  XL  L  M  S

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need more information? <http://bbcfnc.org/baptism>

