

# BAPTISM

CLASS CURRICULUM





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*This baptism curriculum is intended* to be used as a guide to help you personally understand baptism and discern your readiness, as well as to help parents shepherd and lead their children through the process of determining whether or not he or she is ready to be baptized. We encourage you to take your time and be prayerful during this process.

This curriculum is broken down into three parts: 1) What is baptism, and how does one become a Christian, 2) the marks of a Christian, and 3) frequently asked questions about baptism. We want this curriculum to provide a biblical understanding of what baptism is and what is its purpose, to be clear on how one is saved, and to help one see markers, fruit, and evidence of the transforming grace of God in his or her life.

We pray that the Lord would give you discernment as you grow in your understanding of and consider the celebration of the ordinance of baptism! Please do not hesitate to contact [info@redeemerlubbock.org](mailto:info@redeemerlubbock.org) if you have any questions along the way.

*- Redeemer Staff & Elders*



# WHAT IS BAPTISM?

## Discussion Questions

1. "What do you know about baptism?"
2. "Who gets baptized?"
3. "Does baptism save us?"
4. "What is the purpose of baptism?"

## Read

- **Matthew 28:18-20** - [18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] 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, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
- **Colossians 2:11-12** - [11] In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [12] having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.
- **Romans 6:3-4** - [3] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] 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.

## Redeemer Doctrinal Statement on Baptism

*Water baptism is intended only for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become His disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death, and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.*

Redeemer Church believes that Jesus gave two ordinances to the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 3:16, Matthew 26:26-30, Matthew 28:18-20). In Matthew 28, Jesus commands us as believers to go make disciples, baptize them, and teach them how to honor God with their life. Jesus said "make disciples then baptize them". Faith in Jesus precedes baptism. As a result, when determining whether or not you are ready for baptism, you are asking "Am I a Christian? Do I have faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?" Similarly for parents, when determining whether or not your son or daughter is ready for baptism, you are asking, "Is my son/daughter a Christian, and is he/she at an age that he/she can appreciate and understand baptism?"

## **To be clear, baptism does not save us**

For the Israelites, circumcision was a sign of their covenant with God as God's people. For Christians, similarly, baptism is an outward expression or sign of an inward change. Though baptism is not salvation for us, it must still be held in high regard because it is a command that Jesus has given us. It must be taken seriously because baptism preaches and displays the gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection, and it is an act of obedience. Even Jesus was baptized as an example to us! When we come to faith in Jesus, we are baptized to demonstrate and proclaim that belief in the gospel to the Church and to the world. We are saying that because of Jesus' death, our sin and old life is buried with him (going into the water) and because of Jesus' resurrection, we now walk in newness of life and hope in him (coming out of the water).

## **There are three things that occur in baptism:**

1. The person being baptized declares before God and the church that they have submitted to Christ as Lord. Therefore, all of their life will be lived in accordance with his word and rule.
2. To the believer they recall their own baptism. Recalling that they have been buried and raised with Christ. The believer is therefore encouraged in their walk with the Lord.
3. To the unbeliever the gospel of Jesus Christ is put on display as they see someone declare that they were a sinner but Christ has saved them and now they are submitting to his rule.

**FAQ** *(for more in depth answers to some of these questions and more, please refer to the baptism appendix):*

### **Why was Jesus baptized?**

- It was an endorsement of John the Baptist message of repentance and belief in the gospel (Matthew 3:13-15).
- It was a foreshadowing and a picture of the work he was going to accomplish through his death, burial and resurrection (Colossians 2:11-12).
- Jesus' baptism marks the official beginning of his ministry (Mark 1:9-14).

### **Why does Redeemer practice full immersion when baptizing?**

- It is how Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11).
- It more closely symbolizes the work of Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection (Colossians 2:11-12). Please see the appendix for a more in depth explanation.

### **What if I was sprinkled or baptized as a baby or child?**

- Our question would be, "Was that sprinkling/baptism after you believed in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for salvation?" The Bible calls believers to get baptized as an act of obedience after he/she comes to faith in Jesus. Please refer to the appendix for a more in depth explanation.

### **Does Redeemer have a recommended age for baptism?**

- Typically, Redeemer recommends to delay baptism of children until the ages of 10-12. Please see the appendix for a more in depth explanation.

# HOW ARE WE SAVED & BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. *“Who is Jesus? What did he do? Why did he have to come?”*
2. *“What is the Gospel?”*
3. *“How does someone become a Christian?”*
4. *“Do you have a story of coming to faith in Jesus? What is your story?”*

## **Read**

- **Romans 10:8-13** - [8] But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); [9] because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. [11] For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. [13] For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
- **John 14:6** - [6] Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** - [14] For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; [15] and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (ESV)

## **True Christians have faith in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection and declare Him as their Lord.**

The Bible tells us that God is holy and completely good, and we were created to worship and love him! However, we choose to worship created things instead of God our Creator (Romans 1:25). This is sin and because of our sin and God’s holiness, we are separated from God and our sin deserves eternal death (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23). Out of his love for us, God sent his Son Jesus to live the perfect life for us and take the penalty for our sin. God poured out his wrath for sin on Jesus to the point of death on the cross. Three days later God raised Jesus from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-6), and those of us that have faith in the truth of Jesus’ death and resurrection are saved (Romans 10:9-10) and have the hope of eternal life with God the Father (John 17:3)!

Jesus is Lord whether or not we ever confess him as Lord. That is who he is! We are saved when we confess him as Lord and believe God rose him from the dead because it is a turning from our sin and a surrendering to his Lordship over our life (Romans 10:9-10).

*Have you done this?*

*Have you believed that Jesus died the death that you deserve and rose from the dead?*

*Have you declared that you will no longer live for yourself but live for Jesus?*

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### **Additional Readings:**

- *What is the Gospel?* - Greg Gilbert
- *Explicit Gospel* - Matt Chandler
- *Ephesians 2:1-10*

# MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

*The following sections are marks of a Christian. Meeting the requirements of the following sections are not the means of salvation. They are simply evidence of a person who has been changed by the grace of God through faith in Jesus.*

## 1. **True Christians walk in the light and love God's commandments.**

*Discussion Question #1 - "What is the difference between walking in darkness and walking in the light?"*

*Discussion Question #2 - "If we have been saved from our sins and made righteous through faith in Jesus, why does obedience matter?"*

### **Read**

- **1 John 1:5-7** - [5] This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. [6] If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.
- **1 John 2:3-6** - [3] And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. [4] Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, [5] but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6] whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Before we come to faith in Jesus, the Bible tells us that we are walking in darkness (Proverbs 4:19, John 3:19). We live our lives for ourselves and run after things that do not satisfy, are destructive, and temporal. In sin, we are living with no hope. Jesus claimed to be the light of the world (John 8:12), and he stepped into the darkness and overcame it through his life, death, and resurrection. When we come to faith in Jesus, our eyes are opened, and we are given new hearts (Ezekiel 36:26). This radical change brings new desires to love and live for God and obey whatever it is he is asking us to do.

"Walking in the light" means we now reflect the light of the world, Jesus (John 8:12), because of the power of transformation that the Spirit of God brings about in us. This does not mean that we will do that perfectly, and it does not mean that we will never sin, but it does mean that we will agree with God's commandments and seek to obey them. The way that we demonstrate our love for God and our faith in Jesus is by obeying his commandments. Do you trust and believe that God's commandments are good and are for your good? Do you see a desire within yourself to be obedient to Jesus?



## **2. True Christians understand they are sinful, hate their sin, and follow after holiness.**

*Discussion Question #1 - "What is sin?"*

*Discussion Question #2 - "What is the conviction of sin? What is the difference between godly grief and worldly grief?"*

### **Read**

- **1 John 1:8-2:1** - [8] If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10] If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. [1] My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
- **1 John 2:29** - [29] If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.
- **1 John 3:3-9** - [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. [4] Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. [5] You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. [6] No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. [7] Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. [8] Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Again, a true Christian will not live a perfect life without sin, but they will seek to be aware and also experience conviction over their sins and repent of them. The reason we hate our sin is because in order for us to have a relationship with God, Christ had to pay for the penalty of sin. He had to die in our place for us to belong to him. Sin is serious. That is why a true Christian will not habitually minimize their sin, but they will be grieved by their sin. They understand that sin is dishonoring of God. The phrase "practice of sinning" in these verses is referring to individuals who continually and habitually sin with no desire for obedience or repentance. Christians will seek to live holy and godly lifestyles by repenting of their sin and allowing the Holy Spirit to work and sanctify (make holy) them. Do you feel conviction and godly remorse over your sin (2 Corinthians 7:10)? Are you quick to confess your sin to God and to others? Have you seen growth and victory over sin in some areas of your life?

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### **Additional Readings:**

- *Matthew 5:29-30*
- *Romans 6*
- *Ephesians 2:1-10*
- *Hebrews 12:1-2*

### 3. True Christians love the Church.

*Discussion Question #1 - "What are the greatest commandments?"*

*Discussion Question #2 - "What is the Church?"*

#### **Read**

- **Matthew 22:36-40** - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."
- **1 John 2:9-11** - [9] Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. [10] Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. [11] But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
- **1 John 3:10** - [10] By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.
- **1 John 3:14-15** - [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

True Christians will have a love for others. The summary of all the commandments is to Love God and Love Others (Matthew 22:40). They will understand that because of the love that Jesus has shown them through laying down his life for us, we too should show the same sacrificial love to others, especially those in the family of God. We have been perfectly forgiven of our sin and given grace when we did not deserve it, likewise we can forgive and give grace to those that have wronged us (Matthew 18:21-35). To love God is to love others, and John is telling us that we cannot truly love God if we are not loving others. Again, Christians do not do this perfectly, but they desire to be loving and gracious towards others because of the love and grace they have experienced from God. How has the grace that Jesus has shown you caused you to give grace and forgive others?

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#### **Additional Readings:**

- *Life Together* - Dietrich Bonhoffer
- *What is a Healthy Church Member* - Thabiti Anyabwile
- *Relationships: a Mess Worth Making* - Timothy Lane and Paul David Tripp
- *Ephesians 4:1-16*
- *John 13:35*
- *John 15:9-17*
- *John 17*

#### **4. True Christians value sound doctrine.**

*Discussion Question #1 - "What is the Bible?"*

*Discussion Question #2 - "What is doctrine?"*

*Discussion Question #3 - "Why is it important to have sound doctrine?"*

#### **Read**

- **2 Timothy 3:16** - [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- **1 John 2:20-23** - [20] But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. [21] I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.
- **1 John 4:1-2** - [1] Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.
- **1 John 4:6** - [6] We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

True Christians will value God's Word because it is one of the primary ways God has revealed himself to us! "The heart cannot love what the mind does not know." – Jen Wilkin. We should love and value the Scriptures because they are the means by which we know that God saves sinners through his son Jesus, and it shows us how to live lives pleasing to God (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 119:105). How could we not follow the teaching in this book that proclaims such incredible news? Christians will love sound doctrine because it prevents us by being swayed from the truth of Scripture. If we are to pursue holiness and live a life worthy of the calling of Christ, then we need to know what the Scriptures teach us about how to conduct our lives. Does your life demonstrate a love for God's word and a submission to it as the authority in your life?

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#### **Additional Readings:**

- *Christian Beliefs: 20 Basics Every Christian Should Know* - Grudem
- *Taking God at His Word* - Kevin DeYoung
- *Matthew 5-7*
- *John 14:15*
- *Romans 12:1-2*
- *Ephesians 4:11-14*

## **5. True Christians have the Holy Spirit.**

*Discussion Question #1 - "Who is the Holy Spirit?"*

*Discussion Question #2 - "What does the Holy Spirit do?"*

*Discussion Question #3 - "Is there evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life?"*

### **Read**

- **1 John 4:13** - [13] By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.
- **Galatians 5:22-24** - [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The Holy Spirit is one of the members of the Trinity. The Trinity is composed of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Three members = One God. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the truth of the gospel, that we are dead in sin but are made alive in Christ. When someone comes to faith in Jesus (God the Son), God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in a person to comfort them in times of trouble (John 14:16), convict them of sin (John 16:8), make them more holy (1 Pet 1:2), and help them determine God's will (1 Cor 2:10-12) and more.

The Spirit is given to us by God as a guarantee of our saving faith (Ephesians 1:13-14). Every true believer in Jesus has the Holy Spirit in them. A Christian with the Holy Spirit will have evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their life (Ephesians 5:22-24). Again, a Christian will not do this perfectly, but will have an increased desire to live a life that reflects Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18), who is a perfect display of the fruit of the Spirit.

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### **Additional Readings:**

- *Delighting in the Trinity* - Michael Reeves
- *John 15:26-16:15*
- *2 Corinthians 3:18*
- *Galatians 5:16-26*
- *Ephesians 1:13-14*
- *1 Peter 1:1-2*

# BAPTISM APPENDIX

## **1. What if I was baptized before, should I be rebaptized?**

There are two kinds of people who fall into this category. Those who have been baptized as an infant and those who have been baptized later in life but question if it was valid. The question both people must ask is, “Was I baptized because of my own faith in Christ?”

For those who were immersed or sprinkled as an infant before they confessed faith in Christ, that was not what we would consider believer’s baptism, and therefore should be baptized as a believer.

For those who were baptized later in life but have questions about its validity, we encourage you to talk through this with a staff member. Some people are rebaptized because of a genuine faith that is new, while others seek rebaptism because of a sense that their salvation depends on their effort. It’s important to understand the difference between a genuine salvation experience, and the highs and lows of a growing faith. There will be times of unfaithfulness followed by repentance. It is unnecessary, even improper, to be baptized again after each time of spiritual growth through repentance. However, if a person was baptized as a child or young student out of family or peer pressure and not out of sincere faith, then that person should be baptized.

Again, both categories of people must ask if their first baptism experience was based on their personal faith in Christ. If so, there is no need to be baptized. If not, this is an opportunity to be truly baptized for the first time.

## **2. How should a person be baptized?**

Above we stated that Redeemer practices confessor’s baptism; the mode we believe to be taught in Scripture is that of immersion.

- I. The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse. Our word baptize is a transliteration of this word.
- II. Immersion best displays that we have died, been buried, and subsequently been raised with Christ. Paul, in the letter to the Romans and the letter to the Colossians, connects baptism with this imagery. He states, “Do you not know that 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] And again, “having been buried with him 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]

III. The surrounding context of baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.

- A. **Matthew 3:16**, “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.”
- B. **Mark 1:5, 10** “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. 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.”
- C. **John 3:23**, “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized.”
- D. **Acts 8:38–39**, “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.”

### **3. Who should baptize believers?**

The Bible is not explicit as to who is or who is not allowed to perform baptisms. Therefore, the practice of Redeemer is to allow any male or female professing believer that would affirm our doctrinal statement, who has obeyed the ordinance of baptism to perform a baptism. This could be the person who has led you to faith, your Gospel Community (GC) or small group leader, a parent, or family member. If you would like help deciding who should baptize you, Redeemer staff can help you make that decision.

### **4. Why does Redeemer recommend delaying baptism of young children?**

*We encourage parents to delay baptism of their children until at least the ages 10–12. Here is why:*

1. Though there are specific examples of individuals getting baptized immediately, there is not a specific command to baptize quickly,
2. because baptism is for those that have been saved by God and have the Spirit dwelling in them, we want children to have an opportunity to display fruit of the transforming grace that comes from genuine faith in Jesus, and
3. we want children to have a deep understanding of baptism and the ability to look back on their baptism with clear memories of the entire process and celebration of their salvation.

We believe that parents are the primary spiritual influences and disciplers of their children, and we acknowledge that discernment of readiness for baptism in your children can be a challenge. We want to encourage you and come alongside you to strive to continue to cultivate a desire within your children to love Jesus, be obedient to him, and grow in their knowledge of him. We encourage you to be just as passionate about discipleship and seeing growth in your children’s faith as you are about celebrating their faith by baptism. Baptism is not the end goal, life-long obedience to Jesus and discipleship is the goal. Baptism is just a marker and a celebration along the way. Commit to cultivating a love for God’s word through the resources below as you monitor their progress and growth.

### **Additional Discipleship Resources for Families:**

*Foundations for Kids: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan, New Testament* by Robby and Kandi Gallaty

*Foundations for Kids: A 260-Day Bible Reading Plan for kids, Whole Bible* - Robby and Kandi Gallaty

*Jesus Storybook Bible* - Sally Lloyd Jones

*The Gospel-Story Bible* - Marty Machowski

*New City Catechism*

*The Biggest Story* - Kevin DeYoung

*The Ology* - Marty Machowski

*God Made Me and You* - Shai Linne

*God's Very Good Idea* - Trillia Newbell

## **5. What is baptism of the Holy Spirit?**

There has been disagreement among believers as to the nature of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. In Luke's gospel he states, "As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'" [Luke 3:15-17] Matthew and Mark both record the same event. [Matthew 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8][3]

Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations and teaching hold that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience that follows conversion. At this time the believer is then empowered by/through spiritual gifts that makes them more effective in their service to the Lord. This understanding is based by and large on the fact that on Pentecost the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a unique way. This argument is dependent on believing that the disciples had come to faith before Pentecost.

At Redeemer, we hold that the baptism, or filling of the Holy Spirit, is a simultaneous act that happens at conversion and not subsequent to it. There are two important passages from the book of Acts that shed light on to this understanding. First, in Acts 2:1-4 Luke records, "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The question is, is this experience subsequent to the disciples believing or simultaneous to them believing? To answer that question we must look at Peter's retelling of when the Gentile came to faith in Acts 11. He states, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" [Acts 11:15-17, emphasis added.] Peter says that their receiving the Holy Spirit was on that day that they believed.

## 6. What do different denominations believe about baptism?

Within the understanding of baptism there are two major views, paedobaptism and credobaptism. Paedobaptism, coming from the Greek term, paidion meaning infant or child, is the practice of baptizing infants. Credobaptism, coming from the Latin term credo meaning ‘I believe,’ is the practice of baptizing based on a confession of faith. As stated above, Redeemer practices credobaptism. This appendix will focus on: presenting an understanding the argument for paedobaptism, the differences within that understanding, and our response.

### *Roman Catholicism*

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The Vatican states, “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (vitae spiritualis ianua), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.’”[1]

We believe the Bible teaches that: **1)** The Spirit regenerates mysteriously, through no formal act, **2)** Christ forgives and frees from sin through faith in his atoning work, **3)** We are adopted as members of Christ and his kingdom through the same faith in his atoning work. **4)** Baptism is an act of obedience, a symbol, and a testimony of salvation by grace alone that has already taken place.

### *Lutheran Paedobaptism*

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The Lutheran understanding of baptism is similar to that of the Catholic both in mode and in theological backing. The Missouri Synod states, “We believe that Baptism is one of the miraculous means of grace (another is God’s Word as it is written or spoken), through which God creates and/or strengthens the gift of faith in a person’s heart.”[2] And again, “We believe that when an infant is baptized God creates faith in the heart of that infant. We believe this because the Bible says that infants can believe and that new birth (regeneration) happens in Baptism. The infant’s faith cannot yet, of course, be verbally expressed or articulated by the child, yet it is real and present all the same.”[3] Therefore, the Lutheran understanding of baptism is that baptism is a means of grace which creates faith in a person. Again we would disagree with this understanding as we do not believe that baptism is salvific, but rather it is in response to a person repenting and confessing.

### *Methodist Paedobaptism*

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According to the United Methodist Baptism Covenant, Methodists believe that, “Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ’s holy Church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit.”[4] That is to say that baptism according to Methodist teaching holds that baptism makes one part of the people of God, the church. Furthermore, they “believe that in baptism God initiates a covenant with us, announced with the words, ‘The Holy Spirit works within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.’ This is followed by the sign-act of laying hands on the head, or the signing of the cross on the forehead with oil.”[5]

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1. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm) | 2. <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine#purpose>  
3. Ibid. | 4. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/the-baptismal-covenant-i> | 5. <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/baptism>



Methodists do not believe that baptism is salvific. However, they do believe that baptism “signifies God’s initiative in the process of salvation.”[6] This is part of a teaching from John Wesley, called ‘prevenient grace.’ It is the type of grace that the Holy Spirit is working in people as he brings them to salvation.

Because Methodists do not hold that baptism saves, children who are baptized before they make a personal confession of faith go through confirmation later in life. This is to show that prevenient grace (the Holy Spirit working in them to bring salvation) has accomplished its work and they have become a believer.

### ***Presbyterian Paedobaptism***

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Presbyterians hold to a view of baptism that includes the baptism of infants, but differs significantly from the Lutheran and Catholic view. While the mode of baptism is similar to the previous forms the theological underpinnings are completely different.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states, “Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ’s own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.”[7] And again, “Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.”[8]

The Presbyterian practice of infant baptism is founded upon the continuity of covenants between the Old and New Testaments. The covenant between God and his people, Israel, in the Old Testament was sealed with the sign of circumcision that would be done to the male child on the eighth day after his birth. This would mark him as a member of God’s covenant people. In the same way, Presbyterians understand baptism as the seal and sign of God’s New Covenant people. Therefore, children of believers are baptized to show that they are part of God’s covenant people.

While we would agree that baptism is the sign and seal of the New Covenant people of God, we would disagree as to how one enters that people. In the Old Testament people were members of the people of God through physical birth. However, in the New Testament we see that it is not physical birth that makes one part of the people of God, but rather spiritual birth.

Jesus stated in his conversation with Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” [John 3:5–7] Therefore, entrance to the kingdom of God begins with being born of the Spirit. We hold that Spiritual birth begins when the Spirit imparts faith to a sinner and they subsequently confess Christ as Lord.

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6. Ibid. | 7. [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/index.html?body=/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/ch\\_XXVIII.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/index.html?body=/documents/wcf_with_proofs/ch_XXVIII.html) | 8. Ibid.

### *Endnotes*

Some of the content is adapted from “Baptism at the Village,” a document prepared for The Village Church, Flower Mound, TX and “Baptism at The Austin Stone,” a document prepared for The Austin Stone, Austin, TX.

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