

Baptism at Harbor City Church

QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM AT HARBOR CITY CHURCH

1. What is baptism?

Baptism is a water ceremony where God responds to our commitment to Him by committing Himself to us. In baptism, God tells us that we are forgiven and we are filled with His Holy Spirit. We get a new start with a new heart.

2. How do I know if I'm ready for baptism?

The only requirement for baptism is that you have turned the direction of your life to follow Jesus. That's what it means to repent (Acts 2:38-39). Turning means to 1) confess your sins, 2) trust Jesus' death and resurrection for your forgiveness, and 3) commit to following Jesus as your God and Savior.

3. If I've been baptized before (1) as an infant or (2) I stopped following Jesus for a time and now I've recommitted my life to Him, should I get baptized again?

You don't need to. God doesn't expect you to. But you may if you want. If you are following Jesus now, God's promises in your previous baptism(s) have come true. Once adopted, you don't need to be re-adopted. Your current commitment honors Jesus and your previous baptism(s) without being rebaptized.

However, if you'd like to publicly recommit to Jesus, you absolutely may. Jesus is honored any time we publicly identify with Him. For some people, it really helps them to stand before God and the church family to re-dedicate their lives. If you'd like to do this, Jesus would be honored by your decision. We would think about this as a Covenant Renewal Ceremony between you and Jesus, sort of like married people who choose to renew their vows.

4. What does it mean to baptize my children?

Baptism for our children is a celebration that when we commit to Jesus, God commits to us and to our children. In Genesis 17 God makes a covenant with Abraham that spans the entire Old Testament. Genesis 17:1-14 makes it clear that God's covenant promise is made with believers and their children. At the beginning of the New Covenant church, in Acts 2:38-39 Peter makes it clear that the God's new covenant promise is made with believers and their children. The rest of the book of Acts shows this—that when an adult commits to Jesus, God commits to them and their children. We see throughout Acts and in 1Corinthians that households are baptized. Households include children.

If one or more parents is committed to Jesus, and to raising their child in the faith and in the church, then God and the church commit to helping the parents raise the child to walk with Jesus. The Bible says that the children of believers have the assurance of heaven (2Samuel 12:23). Children are called to obey their parents out of the power that comes from Jesus (Ephesians 6:1). Children are welcomed by Jesus (Matthew 19:13-15), and they are considered holy (1Corinthians 7:14). All these blessings are communicated to parents and their children in their baptism. In our church, we encourage parents (and we help them) to teach their children to grow to express their own faith in Jesus. When children are

able to express the faith for themselves, then they are able to begin taking communion. If you'd like a more in depth understanding of the Biblical reasons to baptize your children, we have many more written resources available. You can ask Pastor Steven (steven@harborcity.church) or Madison Elick (madison@harborcity.church).

5. What's are the next steps to learn more?

1) Let us know you want to learn more: email madison@harborcity.church and she'll connect you with the next step. 2) Have a conversation with Pastor Steven, or one of the Elders or Elder Advisors to answer any questions or help you understand Baptism. We'll ask you about your spiritual journey, to ensure you understand what it means to be a Christian and that you are committed to following Jesus. 3) Be baptized in one of our Sunday services!

6. If I've been baptized before in a different kind of church—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses—do I have to be rebaptized?

The answer to this is theological. We believe that if you've been baptized in a church in the name of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—as this God has revealed Himself in the Bible, then you don't need to be rebaptized. We believe that the Roman Catholic Church misunderstands the Bible on some very important issues, BUT we believe that their understanding of who God is (one God revealed in three Persons) is correct. So people who have been baptized in the Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches do **not** need to be rebaptized, although they may choose to be if they want (see question 3 about rebaptism).

For people who have been baptized in Mormon or Jehovah's Witness Assemblies, we believe they **need** to be rebaptized because those Assemblies believe something fundamentally different about the person of God and His work in salvation. We'd love to spend time in conversation with anyone who has questions about this. Our goal is not to fight or argue theology, but to recognize that there are sometimes disagreements that are significant. We believe committing to Jesus in our church is a new commitment that calls people in those Assemblies to be baptized into a new relationship with God.

Sharing Your Story

For adults, we encourage them to share the story of their spiritual journey. We'd love to have you share your story (3-4 minutes) of 1) your life before committing to Jesus, 2) how you came to commit to following Jesus, 3) how your life has changed since you began to follow Jesus. If you aren't comfortable sharing your story yourself, we'd love to share your story on your behalf so that the church can be encouraged by what God is doing in your life. For children, here are the promises that parents make when their children are baptized:

1. Do you believe that your child is made in the image of God, created to worship, serve, and enjoy Him in all of life?
2. Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
3. Do you claim and trust in God's covenant promises on your child's behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, as you do for your own?
4. Do you promise to instruct your child in the teachings of the Christian faith, to pray with and for them, to live a life in line with the Gospel before them, and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

To the Congregation: Do you pledge to assist these parents in the Christian nurture of this child and to love him/her in whatever way God may call you?

Prepping Parents for their Child's Baptism

Tod and Kate!

Baptizing our children is us committing them to God and God committing Himself to us and our kids. What a glorious reality! And how much does God love Joanie and Harris that He would have her born into your home! This doesn't mean that you are perfect (sorry 😊), it does mean that they will have the blessing of growing up with parents who love Him and can show them what it means to live for Him. This obviously includes confessing our sins and believing God's forgiveness in Jesus. Joanie and Harris need to see that this is a consistent part of life following Jesus, and you'll get to show that to them.

Over and over again in the Bible and in life I see that God works through His people. He communicates His love, His grace, and His strength through the people who have received these things from Him. Nowhere is this shown more powerfully than through parenting. No other relationship has the opportunity to show the faithfulness, patience, love, and instruction of God more than parenting. In baptism God commits to love Joanie and Harris in this way, and in baptism we see that God's commitment to them will be wonderfully (though not exclusively) demonstrated through you!

And for me, remembering/realizing this awakens me to the pressure of parenting. It's a heavy burden to be called by God to image His Parenting through being a father and mother. This is why baptism is done in the church! You as parents can't do this alone, and by God's manifold wisdom, you don't have to. The support and encouragement you need also comes from God through His people. You will stand before God committing yourselves and Joanie and Harris to Him, and God will be committing Himself to You personally and through His church. You will stand alone on stage with me, but the point of that is so that you won't have to parent alone.

This is why I get so excited for this. What a wonderful display of the gospel and the power of God's family together!

Here are the vows that you will take:

1. Do you believe that Joanie and Harris are made in the image of God, created to worship, serve, and enjoy Him in all of life?
2. Do you acknowledge Joanie's and Harris' need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?
3. Do you claim and trust in God's covenant promises on Joanie's and Harris' behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation, as you do for your own?
4. Do you promise to instruct Joanie and Harris in the teachings of the Christian faith, to pray with and for them, to live a life in line with the Gospel before them, and to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Here is the vow that our church family will make toward you all:

Do you pledge to assist Tod and Paisley in the Christian nurture of Joanie and Harris, and to love them in whatever way God may call you?

Let me know if you have any questions at all.

Pastor Steven