

If infant baptism is nothing more than something we (parents, sponsors, and the church) do one day for the sake of family tradition or because we just think it's the "right thing to do" and then forget about it – it loses significance and is a hollow ceremony. Baptism is not an end to itself. It is a starting point in which new life in Christ begins.

Jesus tells a story (the parable of the sower, Mark 4:1-20) in which he teaches that faith is like a good seed planted on good soil, which grows and blossoms to produce abundantly. This is God's desire for the baptized infant – the Holy Spirit is present in the water, and certainly has the power to "plant" a seed of faith in the soul of an infant. Once a seed is planted, you can't see it. Yet it has great potential to grow and produce abundantly. How? By hearing the Word of God and accepting it (see Mark 4:20).

Infant baptism is the starting point – the planting of the seed of faith which will be nurtured through the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ over the days, months, and years to come by parents, sponsors, and the church. As your child grows, bring them to worship, children and youth faith formation, and Affirmation of Baptism (aka confirmation) class in which they prepare to make public affirmation of the promises God made to them in their baptism.

### **Does baptism serve as an "insurance policy" for salvation?**

The Bible does not say that we are saved by baptism. It clearly says that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:8). The assurance of salvation comes when the promises proclaimed at baptism are claimed and confirmed.

### **Can I have a private baptism?**

Baptism is a public event for the whole family of God to celebrate and all brothers and sisters in Christ should be welcome to participate and be present. If after conversations with the pastor, circumstances warrant a baptism outside Sunday worship, members of the Bethany congregation will be invited to attend as representatives of the church.

### **What did Martin Luther say about baptism?**

In his *Small Catechism*, Luther writes that baptism is "not simply plain water. Instead it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word." God's word is the promises of God through Christ Jesus written in scripture and connected to the sacrament of baptism. Those promises are forgiveness of sins, redemption from death and the devil, and eternal salvation to all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Luther continues by stating, "without the Word of God the water is plain water and not a baptism, that is, a grace-filled water of life" and a "bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit." As St. Paul says to Titus in 3:5-8, "He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure."

The significance of baptism is that "the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned through daily sorrow for sin and repentance, and that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

*"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." - Romans 6:3-4*

### **How can I help my child remember his or her baptism and grow in faith?**

Attend worship, pray for them, bring them to Christian education, read the Bible with them, teach them the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and love them just as Christ has loved you.

For more information, refer to the book given to you by the pastor, *Living the Promises of Baptism 101 ideas for parents* (Augsburg Fortress).

**Bethany Lutheran  
Church (ELCA)**

## **Baptismal Parent Guide**



# Baptismal Parent Guide

Welcome to the sacrament of Holy Baptism! This is a special day in the life of your child as he or she is welcomed into the family of God here at Bethany but also the entire church of Christ around the world. He or she will be marked with the cross of Christ which is a sign that Jesus will always be with him or her in his or her journey of faith.

*“And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)*

This is a sign and promise no one can take away. He or she will always be a precious and beloved child of God who was created in God’s very image. (Genesis 1:26) Just as your child is a wonderful gift from God so is the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Should you ever have any questions please feel free to call the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church at 319-643-5998 or email: [pastor@wbbethany.org](mailto:pastor@wbbethany.org)

## Why do Christians baptize?

*“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”  
(Matthew 28:19)*

Jesus issues a command as part of his “last words” before his ascension into heaven. Baptism, then, is not optional for Christians who want to carry out this “Great Commission” of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of two sacraments, visible signs of God’s grace, instituted by Jesus (the other one is the Lord’s Supper), and offered as a very simple, real, down-to-earth and physical way of experiencing God in the world today.

## How did the first Christians baptize in response to this command of Jesus?

The Book of Acts tells 9 stories of baptism as practiced by the early Christian church:

2:14-42	3,000 people in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost
8:12-13	Simon and the men and women of Samaria
8:35-40	Ethiopian eunuch
9:1-19	Saul (Paul)
10:44-48	Gentiles in Caesarea
16:11-15	Lydia and her household
16:31-34	Jailer at Phillippi and his entire family
18:5-11	Crispus, all of his household, many of the Corinthians
19:1-10	Some disciples in Ephesus
22:6-16	Paul’s conversion/ baptism story retold

## So what can I learn about baptism from Acts?

One important learning is the early Christian Church baptized entire households. The Book of Acts (and the entire Bible for that matter) offers no age, gender, or ethnic restrictions for those who are baptized (see Galatians 3:27-28). The Bible does not teach us that “entire households were baptized, except for the little children.”

Baptism is a gift from God offered to all as a “mark” of faith in Jesus Christ. Since “entire families” were baptized together by the apostles of Jesus, it is only logical to assume some of those families would have included young children and/or infants.

*“Let the little children come to me and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” (Matthew 19:14)*

## Isn’t faith a prerequisite for baptism? How can an infant have faith?

For Lutherans, faith is a gift from God. As older youth and adults come to the waters of Baptism they will undergo a period of instruction and affirm the promises God makes to them in Baptism.

An infant or young child is unable to do that, so instead, parents, sponsors, and the church speak on behalf of the infant regarding faith. They affirm those promises and in turn commit themselves to helping this precious child of God grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and the love He has for him or her.

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