



DAMASCUS COMMUNITY CHURCH

BAPTISM

A Study

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A Word from Our Pastor

We are so excited that you have responded to the Gospel, the Good News of new life in Jesus Christ, and are now following that confession with obedience, by seeking to be baptized.

Water baptism is an outward sign and testimony of the inward change that God has already brought about in you, to cleanse you from the sin that would condemn you to death, and to give you the promise of eternal life in Christ. And in your baptism, you will be joining with your brothers and sisters in Christ from every generation and from every tribe, language, people and nation in identifying publicly as one who belongs to Him, and as one of His people, the Church.

Given the significance of this event, it is important that you understand what baptism *is*...and what it *is not*. For that reason, to best prepare you for *your* baptism, we have produced this brief study to guide you through the Scriptures, and to explain our method of believers' baptism here at Damascus Community Church. We also want to encourage you to work through this booklet with a member of DCC so that you can have fruitful discussion and be relationally connected to our church body.

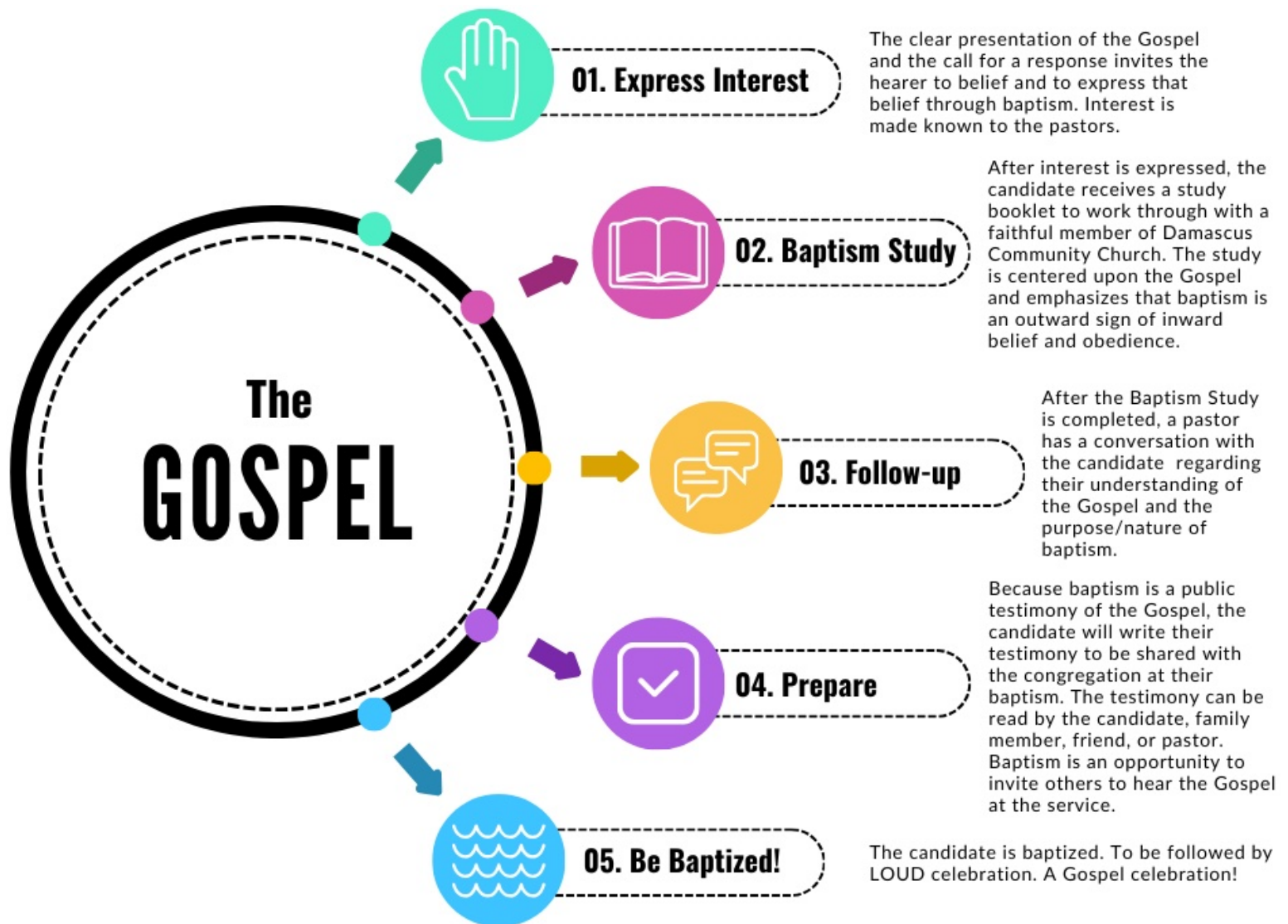
So get with a study partner, grab your Bible and a pen or a pencil, and enjoy this next step of your journey with Jesus Christ!

By His Grace,

Pastor Andy McClellan

The Baptism Process at Damascus Community Church

At Damascus Community Church, we are driven to baptize by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and every step of our process is centered upon the Gospel.



If the Gospel drives our hearts and our practice toward baptism, then we need to ask...

What is the Gospel?

Gospel literally means “good news” and when we speak of the Gospel, we speak of God’s good news for the world. To understand the goodness of this news, we must first of all understand the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of mankind.



God Rules. Because He created everything, God reigns over everything. Creator owns creation. All of creation thrives under God’s perfect reign. Every inch of creation was made by God and for His glory. Upon creating all things, God saw that His creation was good just as He purposed. (See *Genesis 1-2; Romans 1:19-20; 11:33-36; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11*)



We Sinned. God created man in His image to represent God’s goodness and glory to all of creation. But we rejected God’s good rule choosing to rule ourselves. Since Adam and Eve’s unrighteous rebellion, everyone has chosen to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Because God is just and righteous, He must judge sin. Therefore, God’s relationship with man was severed until the appointed Day of Judgment. (See *Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 3:9-20, 23; 6:23a*)



Christ Came. God did not judge and destroy mankind immediately because He had a rescue plan to redeem us from sin and death. When mankind’s unrighteousness was thoroughly demonstrated, God sent His Son Jesus to become a man, live in perfect obedience to God’s Law, and die a sinner’s death as a substitutionary sacrifice – Jesus was condemned by men and judged by God in place of the people He would save. In this way, God would assert His justice and yet be reconciled to the people He loved. But Jesus did not stay judged and condemned. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead to declare to the world that Christ’s atoning sacrifice was pleasing to Him. (See *Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Romans 1:1-4; 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-9*)



We Respond. Jesus’ atoning death is applied to all those who are united to Him in faith and repentance. When united to Christ, all that Jesus accomplished and earned is given to us. We get His sonship. His Father becomes our Father. His inheritance becomes our inheritance. All promises given to Him are extended to us. We are welcomed into perfect relationship with God the Father once again. All these blessings we receive as a gift, which must be received by believing and confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and repenting of our sins. (See *Mark 1:14-15; Romans 10:9-13*)

Do you believe the Gospel? If so, you should know what Jesus says about believer's baptism. So...

What is Baptism?

In Practice. The action itself of baptism is simply being immersed in water and, importantly, being raised back up out of the water. Take a look at these two texts:

Matthew 3:16

- What was Jesus in when He was baptized?
- What does it mean that Jesus “came up out of” the water?

Acts 8:38-39

- Why did Philip and the Ethiopian go down into the water?
- Would “sprinkling” require them to go down into the water or to come “up out of the water?”

While they don't hold the authority of the inspired Word, some voices from Church History are also helpful here in clarifying how the Church has read these texts in times past:

“The procedure for baptizing is as follows. After repeating all that has been said, immerse in running water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If no running water is available, immerse in ordinary [still] water. This should be cold if possible; otherwise warm.” [The reason for running and cold water was to protect from disease. Most churches today do the opposite for the sake of hospitality.]

A Symbol. Beyond a simple physical act, baptism is a symbol of the truth of the Gospel. Much like a wedding ring symbolizes a husband's union to his bride – it is not the union itself but a symbol of that union to the world – baptism is a symbol to both the one being baptized, to the church and to the world of the reality of our union with Christ. There are many symbols present in baptism, let's take some time to look at them:

1. A symbol of Christ's death and resurrection.

Romans 6:3-11

- Why is it important that we are united with Christ in His death?
- Why is it important that we are united with Christ in His resurrection?
- What part of baptism symbolizes death?
- What part of baptism symbolizes resurrection?
- Is the symbol lost if the one being baptized is not united to Christ in faith (e.g. an infant)?

2. A symbol of cleansing from sin.

Acts 22:16

- According to this text, what washes sins away?

¹ *The Didache*, meaning "the teaching," contained instructions for church practice supposedly from the Apostles circulated throughout the Early Church from the 1st – 2nd century A.D. While not inspired, it does give insight into the practice of the Early Church.

- Look at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Titus 3:4-7. Who is doing the washing in these passages?

3. A symbol of entering into Christ's body – the Church!

Acts 2:41

- When the text says “were added” who is being added and to what are they being added?
- Look back at 2:37-38. How is the act of baptism functioning in this passage?

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

- According to this passage, how does our baptism teach us to live in unity with other Christians?

Ephesians 4:1-6

- According to this passage, how important is baptism for identifying with the local church? What in this passage tells us that this instruction is for the LOCAL church?

A Message and a Reminder. Beyond a simple physical act and even beyond a symbol, baptism is a visible profession of belief in the Gospel of Christ. It is the God-given means for the local church to identify who belongs to the Church.

Because baptism is a public profession of Christ, baptism is in a unique way a Gospel proclamation. We are reminded of what Christ has done for us and that one day we will be raised with him from death to life. We are reminded that Christ is our life. Let's take a look at a text in which Paul uses baptism to call the church to remember what matters:

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

- What are the Corinthian believers arguing about?
- How does Paul use baptism in order to diffuse the divisiveness?

Baptism also reminds us of our new life in Christ and of our call to holiness on the personal level. Let's take a look at a passage and see how baptism serves as a testimony to us about our life in Christ:

Romans 6:1-14

- How does the event of baptism remind us of what happened to our old life? New life?

A Command. Finally, Baptism is an act of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. In commissioning the Apostles to go out and make disciples, Jesus commanded them to baptize and teach all that he had taught them. Let's look at this pivotal moment in Scripture:

Matthew 28:16-20

- According to this text, for us to be obedient to Jesus what is involved in our making disciples?

Who Should Be Baptized?

We've already illustrated how baptism is a symbol of beginning the Christian life. In light of this, we should only baptize people who have been united to Christ in faith and repentance. What happens in each of the following situations before the people involved are baptized?

Acts 2:36-41

Acts 8:5-13

Acts 8:30-40

Acts 9:1-19

It is clear from the previous passages that a person hears the good news about salvation through faith in Jesus and makes the decision to become a follower of Jesus (a disciple is one who follows someone specifically to learn from him), and then they are baptized. Can a person be forgiven for sin and go to heaven without being baptized (see Luke 23:39-43)?

Given what you've learned, while one can go to heaven without being baptized, does God intend for baptism to be understood as optional? As we have seen, baptism is a command from our Lord. When one comes to Christ, he agrees with Christ's authority over his life. If the Lord has commanded us to be baptized, we should obey. If you are a Christian and have yet to be baptized, **you should be baptized.**

When you are ready to take this step of obedience, please let us know through filling out the Baptism Request at <https://dcc.breezechms.com/form/baptism> or scan the QR code below:



After Baptism

As we saw above, baptism is a symbol of entering into Christ's body – the Church! This means that those who are baptized need pursue church membership. The local church that baptizes you is responsible to remind you of the Gospel that you have publicly professed through believer's baptism.

As part of your Baptism Study, inform the pastor in your interview when you attended the DCC welcome class, or inform them of your intent to attend the next one available. For more on church membership, visit <https://www.damascuscc.org/page/becoming-a-member> or scan the QR code below:



Appendix 1: How to Write Your Testimony²

In Acts 26, Paul stood before King Agrippa and shared simply and plainly the story of his life. Essentially, Paul's testimony followed a guideline that can help you prepare your testimony:

- **Before** he met Jesus (vs. 4-11)
- **How** he came to know Jesus (vs. 12-20)
- His life **after** he met Jesus (vs. 21-23)

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you write so that the most important and helpful aspects of your gospel story will be shared clearly (Acts 1:8). Ask yourself these questions about each point:

1. Before you met Jesus. What was your life like? What characterized you? How did you think of the Lord?

"My family, friends, interest were..."

"The most important thing in my life was..."

"My religious background and attitude about Christ was..."

2. How did you come to meet Jesus? What made you consider Jesus? Share the specific steps of how you became a Christian. If there was a particular Scripture or word that someone said that drew you to Christ, share it.

"I started to see that I need Jesus because of (person, book I was reading, circumstances)..."

"What I thought or discovered (about myself, God) at this point was..."

"I came to understand that Christ..."

3. My life after I met Jesus. What difference has Christ made in your life? In the way you act? Think? In the way others see you? In the way your family sees you? Don't be afraid to share that you still have struggles, but tell how Christ helps you with these struggles.

"What changed was..."

"My desires now are..."

A few final things for you to remember when writing your story...

- Be brief—2/3 of a page, single-spaced, 12 pt. font
- If you have any questions, ask a Damascus Community Church member.

² Adapted from Jared Kennedy's "Student Baptism Manual" from Sojourn Community Church.