

3. WHEN WE KNOW AND LOVE GOD, AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES, IT PRODUCES TREMENDOUS BENEFITS IN OUR LIFE:

Clear Conscience Rom. 8:1	Life & Peace Rom. 8:6	Help with Weakness Rom. 8:26
Purpose Rom. 8:28	Confidence Rom. 8:31	Security Rom. 8:39
Power & Strength Phil. 4:13	Fulfillment Phil. 4:19	Freedom John 8:32,36

This is the kind of lifestyle God intends for us to live. Why then aren't most people really happy?

II. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Man has a natural desire to BE IN CONTROL and to ignore God's principles for living.

"Look out for #1. Do your own thing."

"If it feels good, do it - regardless of what God says about it."

"It's my life and I'll do what I please!"

THE BIBLE CALLS THIS ATTITUDE: SIN.

"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to his own way."

Isaiah 53:6

"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth."

1 John 1:8

Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of His will.

"The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God."

Isaiah 59:2 (LB)

"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal."

Romans 3:23

WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS, THEY OFTEN TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING BEFORE TURNING TO GOD.

"There are ways that SEEM right to man, but they only end in death."

Proverbs 16:25

Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him:

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| * | “My mother was a Christian so...” | Salvation by heritage |
| * | “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just be sincere.” | Salvation by sincerity |
| * | “I’ll give up all my bad habits.” | Salvation by subtraction |
| * | “I’ll work real hard and earn it.” | Salvation by works |
| * | “I’ll be religious and go to church.” | Salvation by religion |

III. WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

Jesus Christ said, *“I AM THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except THROUGH ME!”* John 14:6

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is a Person!

JESUS HAS ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF YOUR SIN PROBLEM!

“The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23

God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him.

“God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

“God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.”

1 Timothy 2:5

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

IV. WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

1. Admit THAT GOD HAS NOT BEEN FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong." 1 John 1:9

2. Believe THAT JESUS DIED TO PAY FOR YOUR SINS AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN ON EASTER, AND IS ALIVE TODAY.

"If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) by which we must be saved." Acts. 4:12

3. Accept GOD'S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. DON'T TRY TO EARN IT.

"For it is by grace you are saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"If you are better tomorrow than you are today, God will not love you more.

If you are worse tomorrow than you are today, God will not love you less.

God's love doesn't ebb and flow. God's love doesn't come and go."

- Max Lucado

Grace is God's part - Faith is man's part. Faith is expressed in obedience.

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

4. Invite JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND BE THE (DIRECTOR), (LEADER), "LORD" OF YOUR LIFE.

"To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God. We need to trust Him to save us. You receive Him through obedient faith and are reborn not physically but spiritually by the will of God." John 1:12; 3:5-7

"That if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." Romans 10:9

5. Acknowledge/Show YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION BY BEING IMMERSSED IN THE BIBLICAL MODE OF BAPTISM.

You can acknowledge your acceptance of, or participation in these first four areas by making the "Good Confession" that we find in scripture.

"I Believe"

I not only understand the Gospel Message on an intellectual level, but believe with all my heart, soul and mind and respond to it by fully committing myself as best as I can to obedience to God's word and will for my life.

"That Jesus Is The Christ,"

The Messiah, the Anointed One, prophesied in Scripture to come from God to man for the purpose of fulfilling God's plan for man set before the creation of the world.

"The Son Of The Living God,"

That Jesus Christ was God, made flesh, fully divine, fully human, equal in deity as God and the Holy Spirit.

"My Lord"

By His death, Jesus acquired a special ownership of mankind, and after His resurrection was exalted by a partnership in the divine administration.

"And Savior"

Our salvation comes through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and our acceptance of Him, as our restoration of the severed relationship man has with God.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY Jesus.

"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river."

Mark 1:9

2. BECAUSE CHRIST COMMANDS IT.

*"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, **baptize them** in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and **then teach** them to obey everything I have commanded you.'"*

Matthew 28:19-20

3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A Believer.

"...many of the people who heard Him **believed** and were **baptized**."

Acts 18:8

"We know that we have come to know Him, if we **obey** His commands."

1 John 2:3

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST'S DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION.

"Christ died for our sins.. He was buried.. and He rose again."

1 Corinthians. 15:3-4

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ."

Colossians 2:12

"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4] We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. [5] If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. [6] For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Romans 6:3-6

2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY NEW LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN.

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!"

2 Corinthians 5:17

"By our baptism then, we were **buried** with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead... so also **we may live a new life!**"

Romans 6:4

Baptism is not works, it is an act of faith.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**.. it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*

Ephesians 2:8-9

... and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...'

1 Peter 3:21

3. IT IS THE POINT WHERE ALL OF GOD'S PROMISES ARE RECEIVED WHEN PRECEDED BY FAITH, BELIEF, REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION.

"Peter said to them, "each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit.
Acts 2:38 (GN)

"And those who believed Peter were baptized - about 3,000 in all! They joined with the other believers in regular attendance at the Apostle's teaching sessions and at the Communion services and Prayer meetings."

Acts 2:41 (LB)

"And then he told them, "you are to go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. But those who refuse to believe will be condemned"

Mark 16:15-16 (LB)

III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

1. BECAUSE Jesus WAS BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water."

Matthew 3:16

2. EVERY BAPTISM IN THE New Testament WAS BY IMMERSION.

(Example) *"...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..."*

Acts 8:38-39

3. THE WORD "BAPTIZE" MEANS TO Dip Under WATER.

The Greek word *baptizo* means "to immerse or dip under water."

IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!

The founders of denominations agree:

Martin Luther (Lutheran Church)... *"I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies."*

John Calvin...(Presbyterian Church) *"The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."*

John Wesley...(Methodist Church) *"Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."*

Brenner (Catholic Church) *"For thirteen hundred years was baptism an immersion of the person under water."*

IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS believed IN CHRIST.

"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized..." Acts 2:41

"Simon himself believed and was baptized..." Acts 8:13

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News .. and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. "

Acts 8:12

At Community, we wait until our children are old enough to **believe** and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a *"baptism of confirmation"* for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed.

This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ, and be obedient to God's plan for salvation.

At Community, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were "confirmed" as children.

V. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

AS SOON AS YOU HAVE BELIEVED!

"Those who believed..were baptized..that day!"

Acts 2:41

"Then Philip began with the Scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him."

Acts 8:35-38

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you believe in Christ you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect" you'll never be "**good enough**"!

Can my family be baptized together?

Yes, if each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. Young children who wish to be baptized are asked to meet with our Minister of Youth for a pre-baptism conversation.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

What should I wear when I am baptized?

Women should wear shorts and a top or a swimsuit, or bring an extra change of under garments. Men may wear a swimsuit or bring an extra change of undergarments. Bring a plastic bag for your wet clothes, and whatever other toiletries you desire. We provide changing rooms, baptismal robes, towels and hair dryers.

Will I have to say anything?

You will be asked to affirm the "Good Confession", That *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and is your Lord and Savior*. You will also be given a Certificate of your Baptism. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.