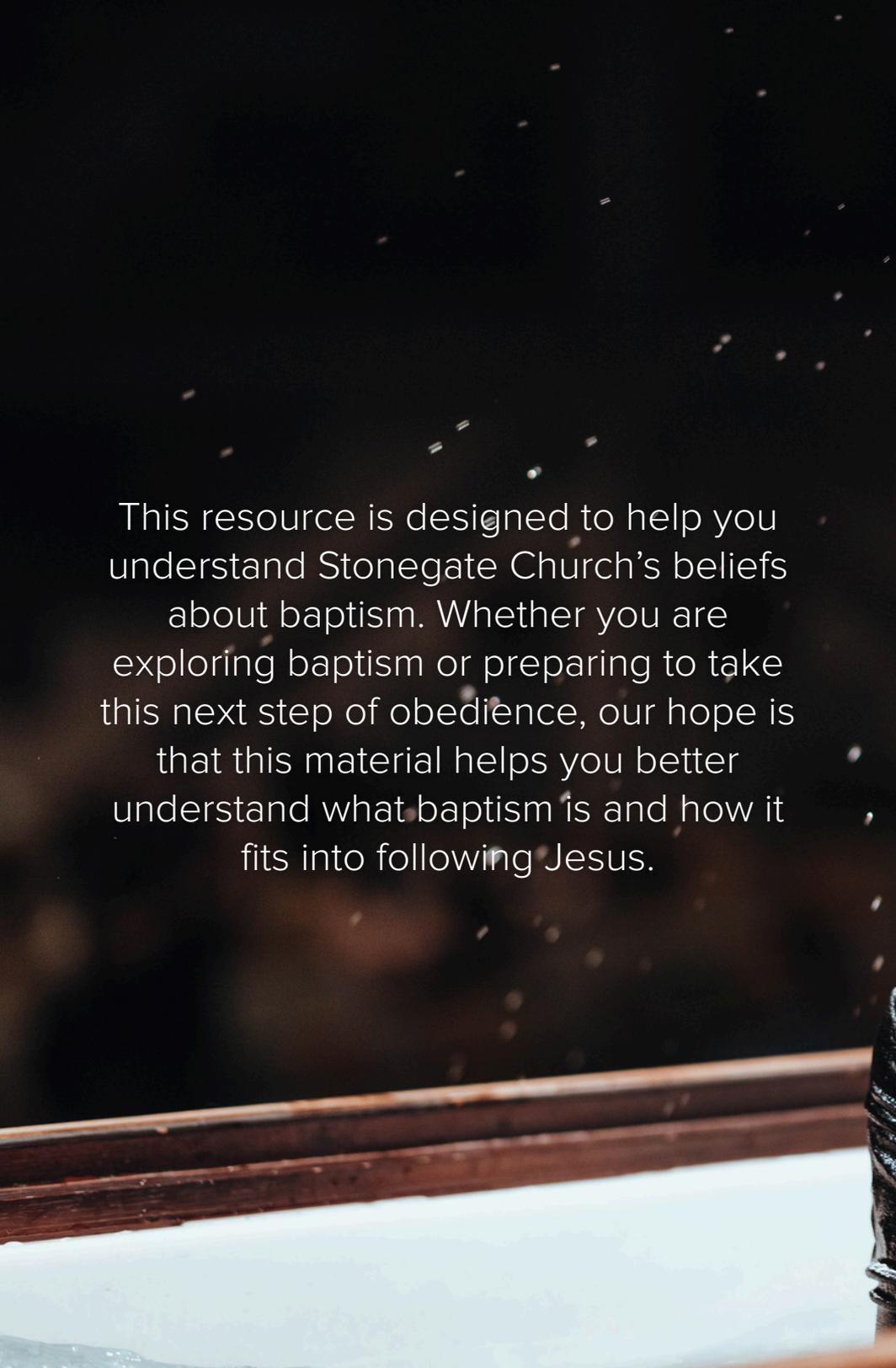




BAPTISM

The background of the image is a dark, starry night sky with numerous small, bright white stars scattered across it. In the lower portion of the image, there is a wooden railing, likely from a balcony or a church interior, which is out of focus. The railing consists of two horizontal wooden beams. The overall lighting is dim, with the primary light source being the stars in the sky.

This resource is designed to help you understand Stonegate Church's beliefs about baptism. Whether you are exploring baptism or preparing to take this next step of obedience, our hope is that this material helps you better understand what baptism is and how it fits into following Jesus.



WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Few decisions after trusting Jesus are as important as the decision to be baptized. That said, it's so important for you to know what step you're about to take and why. It's absolutely crucial for a person to know what baptism is, what it isn't, and what they are doing in being baptized.

WHAT BAPTISM IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

✔ Baptism is a declaration that Jesus has saved you...

✘ But it isn't what saves you.

Baptism makes visible what God has already made true. The Bible is clear that salvation is by grace not by works. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

If physical, water baptism were what saves us, then salvation would rest on something we do—our action, our obedience, our decision to be baptized. People could point to their baptism and say, “That’s why I’m saved.” But Scripture is clear: nothing we do— including baptism—can save us. **Jesus alone saves.**

So why baptism?

Because baptism visualizes invisible realities. It is a God-given symbol that points to the Savior. Baptism does not create salvation; it displays it. It is the outward portrayal of what Jesus has already done in us through grace.

Baptism doesn't save us, but it displays faith in the invisible reality that we have been saved by God's grace.

- ✔ Baptism is a symbol...
- ✘ But it's not merely a symbol.

Baptism might not save us, but it does something in us. One of the things it does is that it strengthens and publicizes our resolve to follow Jesus as King. Baptism is a symbol, but it's not an empty symbol. It's a symbol filled with spiritual significance and meaning. In the Bible, when a person believes in Jesus and is baptized, they are publicly declaring allegiance to Jesus. That's why repentance and baptism are often linked together (see for example, Acts 2:38).

Repentance is actively turning away from sin and turning to Jesus. Baptism marks the turn. It serves as a "U-turn" signpost that signals someone is making a change in direction. Rather than following my own way, I am choosing to follow Jesus.

Think of baptism like a wedding ring. When someone wears a wedding ring, they're wearing a symbol. But it's more than a symbol. It's a symbol that points to something real...they're married. The wedding ring doesn't make a person married; it simply points to the fact they are married.

Baptism, like a wedding ring, doesn't bring a person into a relationship with Jesus, but it does point to the fact they have a relationship with Him.

- ✔ Baptism is a starting point...
- ✘ But it's not the goal.

Baptism is essential, but it's not the goal. If anything, it's just the beginning. It's one of the first steps a believer takes in making the courageous choice to follow Jesus and what He says. Baptism might be your next step, but it won't be your last. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus follows his command to baptize people with a command to teach them all that he has commanded. Baptism should be followed by deeper discipleship. We see this in Acts 2. After three thousand people were baptized, "*they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*" (v. 42). Baptism gets us going down the road of discipleship, but it is the trailhead not the destination.

✔ Baptism can be intimidating and scary...

✘ But baptism isn't just for extraverts.

It can be scary to get up in front of others, tell your story, and then be baptized. Following Jesus is risky. He even compared discipleship to denying oneself and taking up a cross—an instrument of execution (Luke 9:23). That sounds scary, but the point of the imagery is to show you that following Jesus will cost you. What's the first uncomfortable, awkward cross a believer is asked to carry? It's baptism. In many ways, baptism is an early “downpayment” of the risky, scary choice to follow Jesus wherever he leads.

✔ Baptism is personal...

✘ But it's not private.

Baptism is a personal decision, but it is not meant to be a private event. Every baptism is unique, as individuals tell the story of how they found joy in Jesus. And yet, while baptism tells the story of each individual's salvation, it is meant to be communal—as the body of Christ together celebrates what God has done in a person's life.

It's important to note that baptism, as we see it in the New Testament (see Acts 2:41; 8:12; 10:47–48), was done publicly, where other believers could witness it and affirm its beauty. This is why, at Stonegate, we talk about baptism as personal joy in Jesus going public. What God does in the private space of a person's heart, He intends to be celebrated publicly by His people.



JESUS IN MY PLACE



3 INVISIBLE TRUTHS BAPTISM MAKES VISIBLE

Baptism is a physical action that symbolizes deeper spiritual realities. Another way to put it: **baptism makes invisible truths visible**. Think about that for a moment. God loved us so much that He gave us visible signs to display eternal gospel truths. He didn't just give us His grace—He gave us a way to see it, feel it, and remember it through practices like baptism and the Lord's Supper. In baptism, the gospel of God's saving grace is vividly portrayed in a uniquely embodied way. In His kindness, God meets us not only with His word, but with signs and symbols that reinforce it. When someone is baptized, **three specific truths** are made visible.

TRUTH 1: I AM UNITED WITH JESUS IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

Everything about baptism is intentional—from the downward movement into the water to the upward movement of coming out of it again—visually portraying death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. We go down into the water, symbolizing death and burial, and then we come back up again, symbolizing resurrection to new life.

Paul consistently highlights that baptism intentionally depicts a Christ-shaped life—one marked by death with Christ and resurrection through Christ. For example, in Colossians 2:12, Paul writes that we have *“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.”* Likewise, in Romans 6:3–4, Paul explains that believers are symbolically baptized into Jesus' death, so that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, *“we too might walk in newness of life.”* He then adds, *“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his”* (Romans 6:5).

The act of baptism is a visible display of an invisible faith: the old me has died with Christ, and I have been raised to live a new life. I am forever united with Jesus in both His death and His resurrection.

TRUTH 2: I'VE BEEN WASHED AND MADE CLEAN BY GRACE.

In addition to displaying the invisible reality of my union with Christ, baptism also displays the truth that I've been washed and made clean. Just as water washes away dirt, baptism visually portrays that God has washed away my sins by His grace. Going all the way back to Ezekiel 36:25–27, God promised that a day was coming when He would “*sprinkle clean water*” on His people and cleanse them from all their idols, give them new hearts, and put His Spirit within them. Baptism is a public declaration that God has kept this promise in Jesus. Through salvation, God cleanses His people from sin, frees them from idolatry, and gives them new hearts that are able to obey Him. Baptism visibly portrays that promised cleansing, which is why Ananias tells Paul in Acts 22:16 to “*rise and be baptized and wash away your sins.*”

To be clear, it is not the physical act of baptism that washes away sin. Paul clarifies in Titus 3:5 that we are saved by God's mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. Baptism does not accomplish that washing, but it powerfully displays it. When someone enters the water, they remind everyone present that God has kept His promise to cleanse His people by grace and make them new.

TRUTH 3: I'VE BEEN JOINED TO GOD'S PEOPLE, THE CHURCH.

One final invisible truth baptism powerfully visualizes is that the person who believes in Jesus has been joined to God's people. Spiritually, every believer has been baptized “*in one Spirit...into one body*”—the church (1 Corinthians 12:13). As Paul explains in Galatians 3:27–29, this spiritual baptism into Christ shows that the old divisions that once separated people no longer define them. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Paul goes on to say that this unity means that everyone who belongs to Christ is now an offspring of Abraham—in other words, they have become part of God's covenant people.

Baptism is meant to physically display the spiritual unity that salvation in Jesus creates among believers. We are all sinners who have been saved by grace through faith in Christ, and this “one baptism” into the “one body” (the church) puts that unity on display for all to see (Ephesians 4:1–6). Without baptism, this unity would remain largely invisible—real and deeply felt, but not publicly seen.

ARE YOU READY TO GO PUBLIC?

So, you've seen what baptism is and what it is not and how it visualizes invisible gospel truths. Now the question is: **are you ready to go public with your joy in Jesus?** To answer that question, here are a few things to think through:

- Have I truly said YES to Jesus as my Savior? Am I holding onto anything else in hopes that it can bring me joy and salvation?
- Why am I doing this? Am I doing it to display Jesus's love for me or to earn it?
- Do I understand what baptism is symbolizing and what it's not doing?
- Am I willing to be known, taught, and accountable as part of God's people?
- If I'm not willing to be baptized, what's holding me back from going public about my faith?

If you have trusted in Jesus—if you've found joy, forgiveness, and new life in Him—we encourage you to take baptism as your next step. Let your private joy in Jesus go public, and tell others about the treasure you've found in Him.

If you're ready to take that step, we're ready to walk with you. Baptism was never meant to be a solo journey. It's a moment the church celebrates together, as we rejoice in what God has done and commit to walking alongside you as you follow Jesus. What Jesus has already done in you is worth celebrating, and we can't wait to celebrate with you!

And if you're not ready yet—if you still have questions, hesitations, or fears—that's okay. Following Jesus is a journey, and baptism is an important beginning, not a rushed one. We invite you to keep asking questions, keep seeking clarity, and keep taking steps toward Him.

WHAT'S NEXT AFTER BAPTISM?

If baptism is a starting point and not the finish line, then what comes after baptism matters deeply. Baptism is the public beginning of a lifelong journey of following Jesus—the first step, not the final one.

So what comes next?

ENJOY JESUS.

Baptism proclaims that you have found your joy in Jesus. Continue to enjoy Him by spending time in God's Word, reflecting on it deeply, and praying. These practices don't earn God's love, but they help you grow in your enjoyment of Him.

ENJOY JESUS WITH OTHERS.

Jesus didn't just save you as an individual—He saved you and brought you into a family. Following Jesus is meant to happen in community, where others can encourage you, walk with you, and help you grow. Life together in community is a vital part of life after baptism. One of the best ways to enjoy Jesus with others is by joining a community group.

ENJOY JESUS BY FIGHTING SIN.

Sin competes with our joy in Christ and ultimately robs us of it. Following Jesus means learning to turn away from what destroys joy and choosing what leads to life. When faced with the choice between sin and joy in Jesus, we choose Jesus—and we do that together, by God's grace.



FAQs

WHY WATER BAPTISM?

In the Bible, water is rich with meaning. It often symbolizes creation and new beginnings (Genesis 1; Genesis 9), birth, and even judgment (Genesis 6). Yet one theme runs through nearly every use of water in Scripture: cleansing. Water washes away what is dirty and makes it clean.

Water baptism gathers all of these biblical themes into a single, embodied act. When a person is baptized, they are publicly symbolizing that their sin has been judged in Christ, that they have been born again, that they are a new creation, and that their guilt has been washed away. Going into the water symbolizes death and judgment; coming out of the water symbolizes new life.

In practicing water baptism, we are carrying forward the Bible's long-standing imagery of God making His people clean. Baptism visually proclaims what God has promised: *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean... I will give you a new heart and a new spirit"* (Ezekiel 36:25–27).



HOW DOES STONEGATE DO BAPTISM?

At Stonegate, we practice baptism by immersion—being fully submerged in water rather than sprinkled. While we do not believe the mode of baptism is a first-tier doctrinal issue, we seek to practice it in a way that most clearly reflects the New Testament’s symbolism.

In Romans 6, baptism is closely connected to both death and resurrection. Immersion uniquely captures this imagery. As a person is lowered under the water, they symbolically display dying and being buried with Christ. As they are raised out of the water, they symbolically display resurrection to new life with Him.

By practicing baptism through immersion, we aim to visually proclaim the gospel—to show, in a tangible and public way, that those who belong to Christ have died with Him and now walk in newness of life.

BAPTISM SERVICES

Baptism is one of our favorite moments in the life of our church, and we regularly celebrate baptisms during our Sunday gatherings—nearly every week. During the service, you’ll have the opportunity to briefly share your story of how Jesus has worked in your life.

You’ll then be asked one simple question by the person baptizing you: *“Are you being baptized today because you have put your faith in Jesus?”*

After you express “YES”, the person baptizing you will say: *“I baptize you, my brother/sister, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

You will then be baptized as a public declaration of your faith and new life in Christ, surrounded by your church family celebrating with you.



WHO CAN BAPTIZE ME?

The Bible describes God’s people as a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). In the New Testament, baptism is not reserved for an elite class of priests or clergy. Instead, it is a practice entrusted to the whole people of God.

At Stonegate, we love to celebrate the priesthood of believers by inviting friends, family members, or disciple-makers to baptize those they have helped lead to Jesus. This highlights that baptism is not about the authority of the person performing it, but about the work of Christ being proclaimed and affirmed.

At the same time, baptism is always connected to the local church. For that reason, baptisms at Stonegate take place under the oversight of pastors and ministry leaders, as a public testimony of faith and a joyful act of obedience within the life of the body.



IF I WAS BAPTIZED AS A BABY, DO I NEED TO BE REBAPTIZED?

If you were baptized as an infant and now trust in Jesus, we encourage you to prayerfully consider your personal convictions in light of Scripture. Some choose to be baptized as a believer; others understand their infant baptism as later being personally embraced through faith. Stonegate seeks to honor both positions while maintaining our own practice. Our unity as a church is rooted not in the timing or mode of baptism, but in our shared faith in Jesus and our commitment to follow Him together.

IF I WAS BAPTIZED BEFORE I REALLY UNDERSTOOD THE GOSPEL, SHOULD I GET REBAPTIZED?

It is normal for our understanding of Jesus and the gospel to grow over time. Salvation is based on trusting in Jesus, not on having perfect or complete understanding at the moment of baptism.

However, if you believe you were baptized before you truly trusted in Jesus—if your baptism preceded genuine faith rather than expressing it—you may want to consider being baptized as a believer. In that case, baptism would not be a “repeat baptism”, but your first meaningful public confession of faith.

If this describes you, we would love to walk with you and help you tell your story of how you came to trust in Jesus and find joy in Him.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I'M READY TO BE BAPTIZED?

If you trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, are willing to publicly identify with Him, and desire to follow Him as a disciple within the life of the local church, you are ready to be baptized.

Baptism is not the reward for the spiritual elite—it is one of the first steps of obedience in the Christian life. You do not need to have everything figured out before being baptized. You simply need genuine faith in Christ and a willingness to follow Him. If that describes you, don't delay. Baptism is a joyful, public declaration that Jesus is your Lord and Savior.





HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY TO BE BAPTIZED?

At Stonegate, we practice believers' baptism, meaning baptism is for those who personally and consciously trust in Jesus. Because of this, knowing when to baptize a child is a matter of wisdom rather than a decision that can be tied to a specific age. Here are a few important things for parents to keep in mind:

First, know it's okay to wait. Whether you baptize your child now or later does not affect their salvation. There is no rush, and you have time to pray, ask questions, and discern readiness together.

Second, the primary goal is understanding and belief in the gospel. Baptism should flow from genuine faith in Jesus. If a child does not yet understand or believe the gospel, baptism risks becoming a religious activity rather than an act of faith.

Finally, remember that baptism is a starting point, not a finish line. It marks the beginning of a life of following Jesus. Parents should be just as committed to discipling their child after baptism as they are in preparing them beforehand.

WHY CAN'T I JUST GET BAPTIZED IN PRIVATE? WHY DOES IT NEED TO BE IN FRONT OF PEOPLE?

Baptism is meant to be a public declaration of our faith and joy in Jesus. It is a visible way of saying, “I enjoy Jesus.” By its very nature, that declaration is difficult to make while remaining private.

Going public does not require a large crowd. Baptism can take place in a Sunday gathering, a community group, or a smaller setting with friends and family. What matters is not the size of the audience, but the presence of witnesses.

Jesus calls His followers to confess Him before others, and baptism is one of the primary ways believers do that. Through baptism, the church sees and celebrates what God has done, and the person being baptized is welcomed and affirmed as part of the body.

DO I HAVE TO TALK?

Our goal is not to make introverted people feel uncomfortable. Our goal is to tell stories of redemption—to publicly declare what God has done.

Because baptism is about telling that story, the story needs to be shared. But there are many faithful ways to do that. You might share your story out loud, write it out, have someone else read it on your behalf, or record a video that can be shown during the service.

You don't need to speak for long, and you don't need to do all the talking yourself. What matters is that your story of God's grace is told and celebrated by the church.

WRITING YOUR STORY

Begin by spending time reading and reflecting on **Ephesians 2:1–10**. Allow God’s Word to shape how you think about your story and what He has done in your life.

Then, prayerfully write your story. This doesn’t need to be long or polished. A few clear sentences—typically 5–8 sentences (about 100–200 words), and no more than 500 words. Once you’ve written it, practice sharing your story with trusted family or friends. This helps you grow comfortable telling your story clearly and confidently.

When you’re ready, submit your story to our team using the **Baptism Story Form**. From there, we’ll help you take the next step toward scheduling your baptism.

HELPFUL TIPS

As you prepare to share your story, remember that your testimony isn’t about having the right words—it’s about pointing to Jesus.

- Keep your story centered on Jesus and what He has done in your life. The focus isn’t on your past or your progress, but on His grace.
- Be honest and authentic. There is no expectation that you have everything figured out. Following Jesus doesn’t mean life is perfect—it means you’re learning to trust Him more.
- Avoid saying you’ve “always been a Christian.” Faith isn’t something we inherit or grow into by default. Becoming a Christian means personally trusting in Jesus—believing that His death on the cross paid for your sin and that He is Lord of your life.
- Share your story with humility and care. This is your story of God’s work in you, so there’s no need to speak about the sins or failures of others.
- Our prayer is that as you share, people would clearly see Jesus—and be encouraged by the grace at work in your life.



