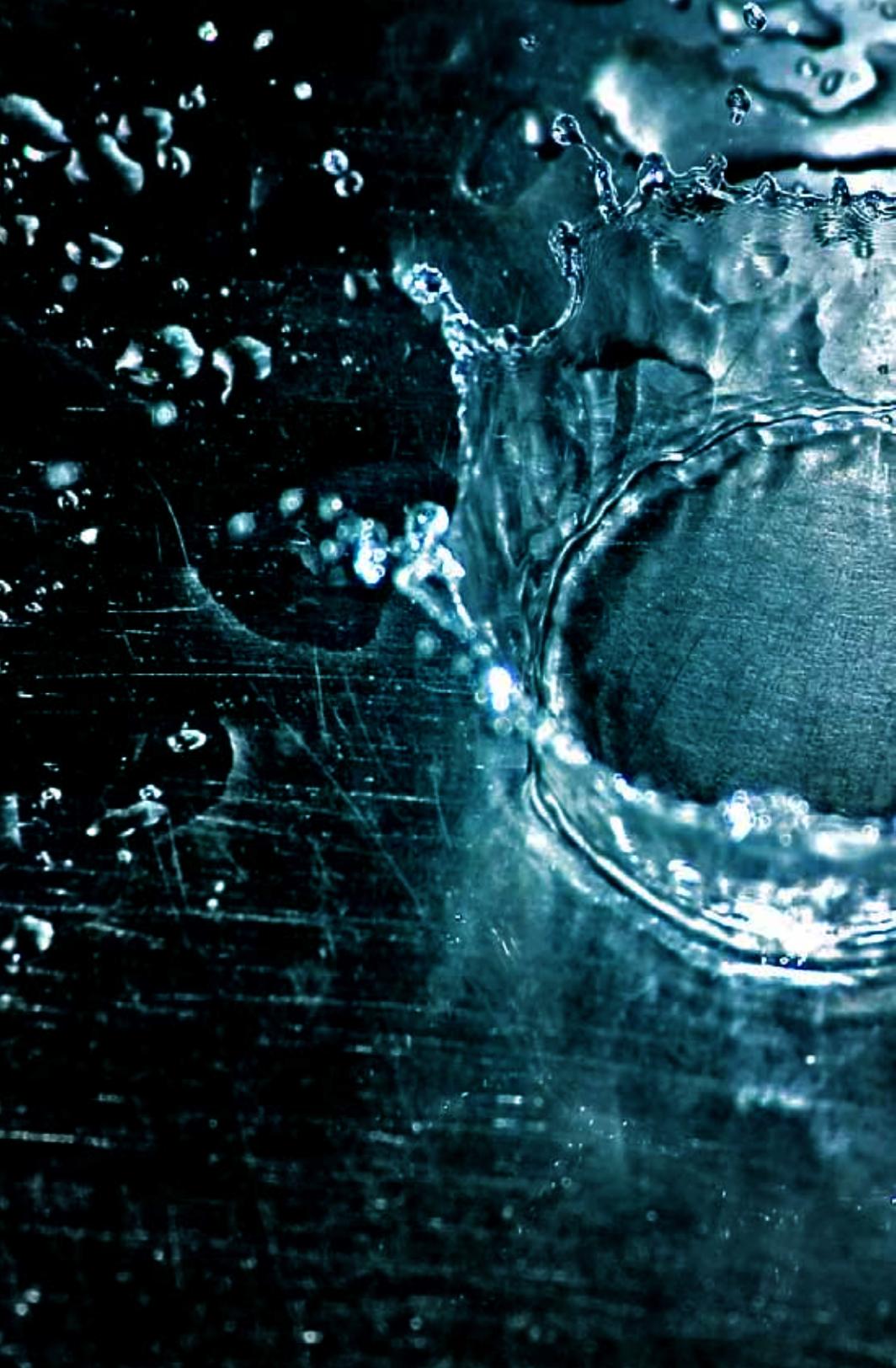
A high-speed photograph of water splashing, creating a dynamic and textured background. The water is captured in mid-air, with numerous droplets and splashes, giving it a sense of movement and energy. The colors range from deep blues to bright whites where the water is most turbulent.

A BIBLICAL GUIDE TO

BAPTISM





PART 1
WHAT DOES
THE BIBLE
SAY ABOUT
BAPTISM?

Where does baptism come from?

A Look at John the Baptist and Jesus...

We begin our study with a look at the first evidences of the practice of baptism in the Bible and the world. Though the Old Testament speaks of ceremonial cleansing rituals (where a person would wash his or her body before offering a sacrifice (i.e. Leviticus 17:15), the specific act of baptism first appears with the gospel accounts of John the Baptist. In fact, in the ancient world, no other form of baptism predates John's ministry in the sense that John intended. We'd be accurate therefore to say that the evidence suggests that John did it first. Let's have a look together at what this ministry was all about.

What did John's ministry of baptism look like?

READ MATTHEW 3:1-17 (SEE ALSO MARK 1:1-11, LUKE 3:1-22, AND JOHN 1:19-34)

- Where is John baptizing the people who come to him?

- What else is John doing in the wilderness besides baptizing people (v1)? Do you think this is significant?

- What is he calling the people to do prior to being baptized (v2, 8, 11)?

- What do you think the word 'repentance' means?

- What happened immediately after Jesus is baptized?

If Jesus was sinless and John's baptism is a baptism of repentance, why is Jesus baptized by John?

This does seem to be a puzzling question and is even one that John the Baptist wrestles with. When Jesus approaches him to be baptized John even says, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Matthew 3:14)

Jesus' answer to John's question is fairly straightforward, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," (Matthew 3:15).



TRUTH The Jordan River is the major river running through the nation of Israel. It is a significant body of water and is even today a public place for gathering and interaction. Anyone being baptized by John the Baptist would have been done so in a very visible way before many people that he or she knew. Baptism was always done in front of a group of people.

Since we've learned that the rite of baptism begins here with John, and that the Law has made no mention of baptism, Jesus could not have anything in view pertaining to Old Testament righteousness through the Law. Likewise John's baptism is one of repentance (Acts 13:24), and certainly Jesus being sinless was not, nor would he ever, be in need of repenting from sin.

Instead what is happening at Jesus' baptism is a public association with a lost people as he begins his public ministry proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven. Rather than identifying himself as a sinner in need of repentance, he identifies himself with the people who desperately need the forgiveness and righteousness that could only come from him.

How do I get baptized?

Sprinkled, immersed, or poured?

In the history of the church, there have been various methods (or modes) of baptizing individuals. These modes historically have included sprinkling, pouring, and immersing. You may have come from a tradition where the mode of baptism is critical to the membership within the local church, or you may have come from one that cared little about it. Likewise, you may have come from no church tradition, and you're puzzled as to how baptism is practiced in this day and age. The fact is, the mode of baptism is an important question that needs to be answered as we proceed. So what, if anything, does God's Word have to say on the mode of baptism?

Does the location where baptism was practiced in the New Testament help us solve which mode was used?

READ MATTHEW 3:16, MARK 1:9-10, JOHN 3:23, AND ACTS 8:36-39

- In each of the above passages, there is a common element. What is that?

- What mode do you think is practiced in these passages? What from an initial reading of the text indicates to you that there is more than just sprinkling or pouring in view here?

Which mode best captures the symbolism behind baptism?

READ ROMANS 6:3-4 AND COLOSSIANS 2:12

- What is the symbolism behind baptism?

- Which mode do you think best captures the symbolism: immersion, pouring, or sprinkling?

Does the word used to describe baptism in the original language help us understand the mode today?

The New Testament was originally written in a form of ancient Greek language known as *koine Greek*. This Greek, like our English today, is rich in its diversity and assortment of vocabulary, and it allowed the New Testament writers very specific terminology to communicate very specific truths.

This verbal precision is extremely helpful to us today as we consider the mode of baptism. The reason for this is simply that the writers of the New Testament chose a word that answers our question of the mode of baptism decisively. Though in fact they could have chosen any number of words to describe the act of placing water on individuals, such as “sprinkling,” or “pouring,” or even “moistening,” in every single instance, only one root word was deliberately chosen.

The word they chose (Baptizo), has a narrow meaning denoting “plunging,” “dipping,” or “dunking.” This one word, used 82 times in the New Testament, was also used outside the Bible to describe the process of dying fabric by immersing it fully into the dye mix, and was even in nautical language to describe a shipwreck in which the sailing vessel was completely sunk.

TRUTH 6 different writers in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and Peter) all used the same Greek word *Baptizo* to describe the rite of baptism.

I accepted Jesus at a church where I was baptized by being sprinkled. Did that count, or does this mean I need to get re-baptized?

No. If your heart at the time of your baptism was to be obedient to Christ in baptism, and in following the leadership you were under you were baptized by another method as a professing believer in Jesus Christ before a body of believers, we believe that this is a genuine baptism. We are not hung up on the display of the symbol so much as we are hung up on the heart.

SO WHAT? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

It is clear from the context of the passages describing baptisms, from the sense behind the symbolism and from the meaning of the single word used, that believers were baptized by immersion in water. Therefore, in seeking to follow the teachings of Scripture, in both the original language of the New Testament as well as the practices discussed in its accounts, when you proceed with baptism at Harvest Bible Chapel, you will be dipped completely under water.



Who should be baptized?

What kind of person can be baptized?

So far we've looked at the origin of baptism and how it's done, and now we turn to examine what kind of person should be baptized. Perhaps you've come from a church background that baptizes infants, or one that requires baptism in that particular church, or perhaps you haven't even considered who gets baptized. Regardless of where you fit in, examining what the Bible tells us about who should be baptized is a critical question we need answered. As before, we'll dive into the Bible for answers.

What must happen in someone's life before they're baptized?

- For each Scripture reference, place the two events described in order:

Acts 2:41

1 2 Received Peter's word

1 2 Baptized

Acts 8:12

1 2 Baptized

1 2 Believed Philip's message

Acts 8:35-36

1 2 Heard the good news about Jesus

1 2 Baptized

Acts 18:8

1 2 Baptized

1 2 Heard Paul and believed

- Read Acts 2:36-38, and give the first requirement that must occur in a person's life before he or she can be baptized. How long did the people wait to be baptized?

Requirement 1 _____

How long until baptized? _____

- Read Acts 8:11-12; 16:25-33 and 18:8, and give the second requirement that must occur in a person's life before he or she can be baptized. How long did these individuals wait to be baptized?

Requirement 2 _____

How long until baptized? _____

- From your reading of the Bible, where do you think baptism ought to be done in the believer's life...?
 - ...at the beginning of their new life in Christ as one of the first acts of obedience?
 - ...in the middle of their walk, once our sins have been dealt with?
 - ...near the end when we can be sure that our sin is gone?

So What? What does this mean for me?

From the accounts contained in the book of Acts, it seems clear that baptism is to be considered an initiatory practice by newer **believers** in Jesus Christ. In fact, the only requirements for this public profession of faith are a deliberate turning from sin, and a turning to Christ in faith for what he has done in dying for our sins. These two requirements, repentance and belief in Jesus Christ, are all that is necessary for someone to be baptized.

But what if I don't think I'm ready?

This is a common objection to pursuing obedience through baptism. Often people may be tempted to hesitate becoming baptized thinking that they're not ready or that there are areas in their lives that need changing first. However, the New Testament is clear that if you have received Christ and want to follow him, there isn't anything else you need to do to get ready. In fact, it would seem that the New Testament directs us to people who are baptized before they have time to get their lives in order. The truth is that you are ready to be baptized as soon as you understand the responsibility to do it.

A Helpful Illustration: The Hockey Jersey

It may be helpful to consider baptism along the lines of a hockey jersey. For a moment consider that you are a very good hockey player who has just been signed to a professional team and given a contract to play hockey on the best team in the league. One of the first things you will do after you have signed the contract, is to attend a press conference. Typically at these sorts of events there are cameras and reporters, and the general manager of the team stands and announces the fact that they have just signed you to their team. What usually happens next is that you would hold up your new jersey (with your name on the back, of course), and you will put it on to the flashes of cameras around you.

Now consider this question: *At what point did you officially become a member of the team?* Was it with the jersey and the reporters, or was it when you signed the contract? Of course, you became a member of the club when you signed the legal document. One of your first acts as an "employee" of that team now was to obediently and publicly declare your standing on that team.

We can think of baptism in a similar way. Rather than saving you or making you a part of the Kingdom of God, baptism is a symbolic way of declaring the fact that the Lord Jesus has saved your life. He has signed you to the Kingdom and you stand and publicly obey Christ as one of the first things you do in your new role as a forgiven and redeemed child of God.

I was baptized as an infant in my previous church, does this mean I need to be re-baptized?

In short, the answer to this question is YES. The Bible nowhere indicates that there were infants baptized and a defense of this position from Scripture simply is not possible. In fact, prior to the third century A.D., the practice of baptizing infants within the church was simply nonexistent. Unfortunately, this understanding of baptism comes more from tradition than from what God clearly teaches us in the Bible. Again we must return to the simple principle that faith and repentance, these two sides to the same coin, must be present in a believer's life before baptism can be observed. Since an infant can neither repent of sin nor actively place faith in Christ or even declare this to the church, the practice of baptizing infants is not according to God's Word.

SO WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

There are only two requirements for baptism according to Scripture: Faith in Christ and repentance from sin. In short, **only a believer in Jesus Christ**—someone who has turned from disobedience to God and surrendered their life to Jesus as their Lord and Savior—can rightly be baptized declaring the work of the Lord in transforming their life.

Why should I be baptized?

Is baptism even necessary?

Now that we've seen what baptism is, and how it relates to us, we turn to the question of whether it's essential or not. You may not have placed much serious thought to baptism prior to picking up this book, or maybe you've just shelved the notion in your mind for a later date. You may be thinking that it seems a little strange to be getting into a tank of water and immersed in front of the church. You may be thinking that this seems like a needless act; something religious and passé. After all, salvation is by grace through faith alone in Christ, right? Maybe you've even outright refused to be baptized, defiantly rejecting God's Word and allowing pride to soak into your life.

TRUTH There has never been a time in the history of the Church when the rite of baptism was abandoned. It's been practiced uninterruptedly from Jesus until today.

If you're thinking any of these things, you're not alone. In fact, at this moment in church history, there are likely more unbaptized followers of Jesus than there have ever been. Many of us do not consider baptism until it's spoken of

from the pulpits, and very few seek out the act on their own.

Again, we need the Bible to teach us whether or not baptism applies to us today. Again, we need God's Word to be the final authority in our lives. Over our personal opinions, over our pride, over our indifference, over our ignorance, we need God's opinion of the matter.

So what, if anything, does the Bible have to say on the necessity of baptism?

Does the Bible provide reasons for me to be baptized?

The answer to this question is an absolute YES! Over and over again, the Bible calls those who believe in Jesus to be baptized. Examine the following passages and fill in the biblical reasons for being baptized:

Reason 1

_____ himself was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17)

Reason 2

The Apostles _____ it (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16)

Reason 3

It allows me to publically _____ my love for Jesus (Matthew 10:32-33)

Reason 4

_____ commanded it (Matthew 28:18-20)

Which reason to you is the strongest? If this were the only reason, would it be enough?

Getting baptized also publicly associates me with Christ's work

- Read Romans 6:1-4 and determine what Paul associates with baptism. In baptism, the believer is submerged under water associating them with what two things in Christ's work (v2-4)

In baptism, the believer is also brought up from the water associating them with what else in Christ's work (v4)?

- Read Acts 22:16. What does the prophet Ananias associate with baptism?

I'm terrified of being baptized. I really don't like standing up in front of people and I get really nervous public speaking. Is there some other way I could get baptized?

This is a very common feeling. Most pastors even get nervous every time they stand to speak, and they do it week in and week out! If you feel as though you are anxious, frightened or even panicked about standing and giving your testimony, you're in the company of almost everyone who's gone before you. Public speaking is a nerve-racking experience, and can be a great source of stress.

That said, your baptism will be unlike almost every public speaking engagement you've ever had to 'endure.' The reason for this is very simple: The Holy Spirit will assist you in your baptism. John's gospel records for us some incredible words of encouragement in 15:26-16:15. It is here that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit who will come and "bear witness about him." We learn

TRUTH In the New Testament there is simply no such thing as an unbaptized believer in Jesus Christ. If you believed, you were to be baptized.

that this witness is not simply an academic recall of information about Jesus, but rather a bona fide testimony through our lives in which we are guided into truth and glorify the Son through our lives.

What that means is essentially this: When you stand in the tank and declare Jesus Christ to be Lord it will be the Holy Spirit who speaks through you. You can have confidence that the Spirit will take over as you testify with boldness the incredible story of Jesus in your life.

So no, you can't be baptized outside of the public setting, but rest assured that you will be greatly assisted by the Spirit of God in your testimony.

SO WHY GET BAPTIZED?

To sum it all up we've seen not only the clear commands from the Apostles and our Lord that all believers in Jesus Christ are to be baptized, but we've also seen how baptism supremely symbolizes our public association with Christ in death, burial and resurrection for the cleansing of our sin. The Bible is clear, if you're a believer in Jesus, you must be baptized.

What does baptism accomplish?

A Look at the Results of Baptism...

We close out our study with looking carefully at what precisely God's word says about the outcome of baptism. When a person obediently follows Christ and profess his or her saving faith in him alone and this done in a public way before a body of believers and this person is baptized, what happens? Is there something special added to that person? What comes of baptism? To answer these questions we'll turn to a few passages that outline for us the lasting results of being baptized.

One result that does not come from baptism

READ *EPHESIANS 2:1-10*

- Verses 1 and 5 both direct us to a state that we were in before our salvation in Jesus Christ. What was that state?

- Verse 5 points us to the reverse of that state. What is it and who does the work to bring it about?

- What in the character of God compels him to act? (v3, 4)

- What significant word is repeated three times in verses 5-8? What does that word mean?

- According to verses 8 and 9, what role if any do we play in our salvation?

- Verse 9 contains the phrase, “not by works.” Do you think that baptism is considered a work?

- From your study would you say that baptism in any way provides salvation?

Two results that do come from baptism

READ 1 JOHN 5:1-5

- In verses 1 and 5, John states what the foundation of our salvation is. How exactly do we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior and be “born of God”?

- Between these two verses John points us to the critical act of obedience to the commandments of God. What according to God’s word, happens when we obey God’s commands?

- Re-read Matthew 28:18-20. Considering the fact that this passage outlines Jesus’ definition of a disciple, and considering that baptism is not optional but a command from the Lord, what fruit would you put to obedience in baptism?

READ ROMANS 6:1-11

- How many times do these verses refer to the word “die” in any form?

- Summarize in your own words what verse 11 says.

- In stressing the fact that we must die to our sin, Paul mentions the rite of baptism in verses 3-4. Remembering that salvation is not a result of baptism, what does baptism have to do with this discussion?

I have heard it said that baptism washes away sin. In fact, 1 Peter 3:21 even seems to allude to this fact. How do you explain that?

Rightly understanding what 1 Peter 3:21 says is the key to unpacking this difficult question. The text of 1 Peter 3:21 is as follows:

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”

Within this text there are two excellent clues to help us understand just what Peter is getting at. First the context of Noah and the great global flood is alluded to in the verses previous to this, and when baptism is mentioned it is in contrast to this physical flood. In fact, Peter even notes that baptism saves not by washing away physical dirt, but goes on to say that salvation rather being physical comes from an “appeal to God for a good conscience.” This simply is just another way of saying, “a request for forgiveness of sins and a new heart,” and confirms for us the fact that the actual act of baptizing in water accomplishes nothing for us in terms of salvation. Peter goes on to note secondly that the baptism itself has no effect unless it is

previously anchored in the “resurrection of Jesus Christ,” namely, what Jesus has done for us. Again, it is not the act of baptism itself that does anything, but the anchoring of faith in Christ.

SO WHAT DOES BAPTISM ACCOMPLISH?

In summary, we’ve seen that though baptism plays no part in my salvation it does provide great assurance and blessing as I obey Jesus’ command, as well as publicly identify me with my Savior’s death, burial and resurrection through the symbolic act of being immersed in water.

The background of the image is a dense, repeating pattern of text. The text is rendered in two colors: a bright orange and a muted grey. The words are of various sizes and are oriented in different directions, creating a complex, layered visual effect. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on typography.

PART 2 **TELLING YOUR STORY**

How Do I Tell What God Has Done?

Your personal testimony is a natural introduction into sharing the Gospel of Christ. Using the following guidelines will help you develop your own story of what God has done in your life. Remember...

- 1** You are a unique person in God's eyes! Let God be original in you. You have your own story to tell, and in the telling Jesus Christ can be lifted up and glorified.
- 2** God's power shows up best in "weak" people. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:1-5: And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
- 3** Ask God to give you insights into how He has worked in your life.
- 4** Don't think of sharing with a group, but rather, with an individual. You do not need to be a speaker, just one who has the riches of Christ and now wants to share those riches with another person.
- 5** As you write, avoid Christian terminology. If you must use some, be sure to explain what you mean by it. The non-Christian is not familiar with Bible language. Avoid using denominational names as well.
- 6** To help you as you prepare, read Acts 22, 23 and 26. Note Paul's "before", "how", and "after". Guide your testimony around these three areas.

Before I received Christ, I lived and thought this way—

Spend a brief time on "before." This is not a biography from childhood. It is best to start at a time in life, which relates to your experience with Christ. If you became a Christian as a child, thank God for the years you have known Him. We often think that the only exciting testimonies are those of people who have experienced much sin. Remember—anything God does in a life is exciting. Christ did not experience sin, but He did relate to people.

How I received Christ—

Be as specific as possible. The Holy Spirit often convinces people that they should receive Christ when others are sharing how they received Him. However, many people cannot remember the exact circumstances of receiving Christ. Remember the when is not as important as the assurance that Christ is in your life.

Now with Christ in my life, as I trust Him, I live and think this way—

Be practical. Explain how you are continuing to grow as you learn to follow Jesus as your Lord. Be realistic don't create the illusion that all things, including you are perfect. Share how Christ is the problem-solver, meeting all your insufficiencies. Some areas where you may have seen changes are:

Relationships

Atmosphere in the home

Bad habits

Adjusting to change

Inner peace & new attitudes

Goals in life, changing

Priorities

Surrendering to God vs. being in
Control

God's love & forgiveness

Fulfillment & peace of mind

New perspective on life

Freedom from fear

Assurance of eternal life



Checklist for My Baptism

The Date of My Baptism _____

What time should I get there? _____

Where should I go? _____

What should I bring with me?

- Your written testimony

- Your Bathing suit
 - For men, your bathing suit should be a shorts-style suit
 - For ladies, your bathing suit should be a one piece with shorts that you will wear over it

- A change of clothes

- One or two large towels

- A plastic bag to hold wet clothes

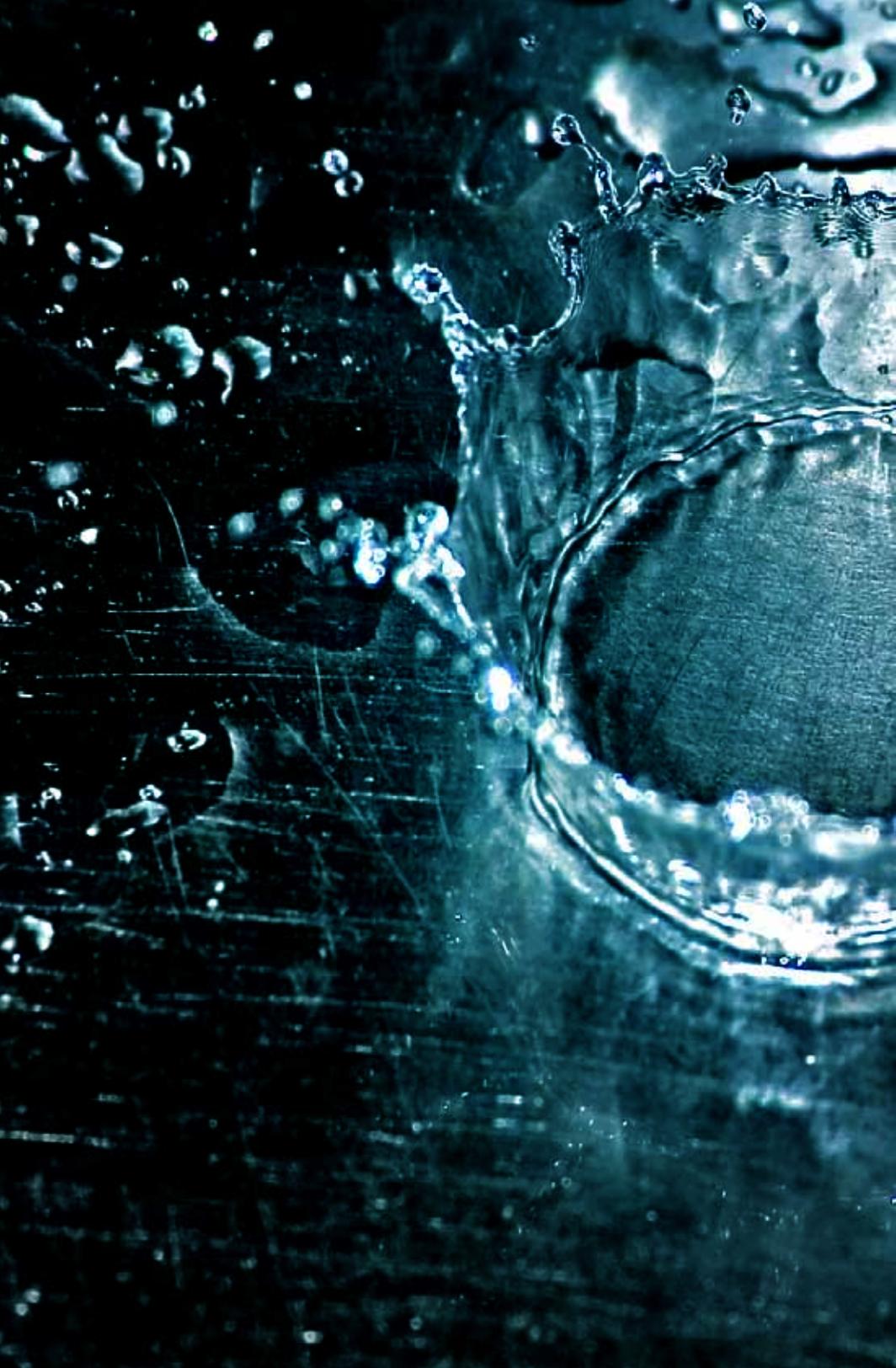
- A hair dryer (optional)

What should I do before that time?

- Pray. As the time of your baptism draws near ask God for clarity as you speak, and peace for any anxiety that may begin to surface.

- Practice. Go over your testimony by yourself as you prepare for your baptism. Pay careful attention to the words you are using and try to avoid jargon if at all possible.







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