

# Understanding Baptism



*A Guide for Baptism and  
Confirmation Preparation*

by

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# *Introduction*

Baptism and Confirmation mark important steps in a person's journey of faith, as they publicly affirm their faith in God and show their trust in Him. In doing so, they show they belong to God and the Christian community. This guide invites those considering baptism and confirmation to explore these two sacraments and the meaning behind the words, promises, and vows made during these services.

We begin this guide by first studying what baptism is, what it means, and then looking at the structure of a typical baptism service. Following on from this, we will look at some of the core beliefs of the Christian faith that are scattered throughout the service. Baptism is grounded in these beliefs, as they form the core element of the promises and vows that are made during the service. Understanding God as Trinity is central to our Christian life and developing a lifelong relationship with Him, and this will be the first of the core beliefs we will consider. Next, we need to know what the Bible is, and why Christians put so much trust in a book written over two thousand years ago. Following that belief, we shall consider what sin is and why sin can rupture our relationship with God. To build that relationship with God daily, we need to communicate with Him. Understanding what prayer is and how we can pray becomes a step that every Christian needs to learn so that it becomes as natural as breathing. Finally, in this section on core beliefs, we will explore what the Church is and why baptism or confirmation incorporates us into a larger community of believers.

The last section of this guide will briefly introduce the Confirmation Service and the Eucharist. We will learn the differences between baptism and confirmation and learn what the Eucharist is for and why this act of taking bread and wine has become a staple part of Christian services since the time of Jesus.

Though this guide has been written for you to take away and read, it's best used as part of a series of guided sessions. By doing so, it will give you the opportunity to learn, reflect and ask questions about the different areas covered. Please use the spaces for reflection to write any thoughts, ideas, or questions. You can then bring these to the group sessions so your group leader can help you explore them further and hopefully answer your questions.

# *The Foundations of Baptism*

## *The Baptism of Jesus*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?”

Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.” Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

*Matthew 3:13–17*



As Jesus was about to embark on His ministry, He walked by the river Jordan, where John the Baptist was teaching and baptising believers. All four Gospels record this event; it marks a pivotal moment in Jesus' life, beginning His formal public ministry. John's remarks show that he baulks at the act of baptising Jesus, for as we will see, baptism is about an act of repentance for sins committed. John knows who Jesus is, not just a man, but God himself, one who is without sin. Jesus responds it must be so. By allowing John to baptise Him, it affirms the ministry of John, and the message of repentance he brought. It also identifies Jesus with all of humanity, as all are called to repent, and all are called to be 'righteous'. This event also allows God to show who Jesus was, the Messiah and the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, and it pointed to the future work of Jesus who would die for our salvation.

Note: as we talk about what baptism is over the next few pages, we need to understand that the Church of England often uses the term 'Christening' for child baptism. It means the same thing so don't get confused.