

Baptism Service
Sunday, December 16, 2012

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.”

Romans 6:3-4



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Being water baptized is a wonderful expression of commitment and a personal statement of faith and we celebrate with all those who are choosing to be baptized today. Jesus commanded that all of us be baptized as a public profession of our love to Jesus Christ.

You don't have to wait for it. You don't have to have it all figured out. Baptism isn't the graduation of the Christian life, it's the inauguration.

A little boy once asked me, "*When can I get advertised Pastor*"...and that's exactly what it is. It's an advertisement for Jesus. If you haven't been baptized I'm going to encourage you to do as soon as possible.

People often have many questions regarding baptism, and today I want to answer a few of them for you.

Who should be baptized?

Water baptism is for those that wish to make a public declaration of their faith.

"Those who believe and accepted His message were baptized..."

Acts 2:41

"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

In scripture, No one was ever baptized until he or she had first received God's salvation offered through Jesus Christ. Baptism never preceded one's acceptance of Christ, thus the Bible teaches BELIEVER'S BAPTISM.

What is the meaning of baptism?

1. It illustrates Christ's death, burial and resurrection

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

Colossians 2:12 NLT

2. It illustrates new life as a Christian

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Romans 6:4 NLT

Baptism doesn't make you a believer – it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you; only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

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

What if I were baptized as a child?

At Christ First we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them. However, some people were baptized as children, and we believe that this baptism is a baptism of confirmation and/or dedication and is to be a covenant between the parents and God on behalf of the child. Since the purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ. At Christ First we teach that every one must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were "confirmed" as children.



Michael J Ruiz

Before I became a Christian I really had no idea who Jesus was. I always knew we went to church to learn about him but I guess I just never took it real seriously. Growing up without a father around has made it really tough on me and my mom, forcing her to work a full time job to support our family. It wasn't until the Winter Camp trip I went on when I was 12 with Faith Community Church where I accepted Christ into my heart. It was an awesome experience, and one that I will never forget.

After becoming a Christian I felt aware of God's presence in my life. I always knew that he was real and all but I never took that next step of praying on a normal basis or getting to church consistently. It wasn't until this year when I really started to get back into going to church with my mom and my grandma. We attend Christ First Church, and it has made it easier for us because my Godfather Robert is a pastor there. Since August of this year, I have been a member of Christ First church youth group C.H.A.O.S. I go every week and actually look forward to meeting up with my new friends and learning more about God.

I want to get baptized because Jesus wants us to. I want to do it in front of everybody, and hope that some of my family members who don't know Jesus will be inspired by this step I'm taking. I can't wait for Sunday!



Veronica Robledo

I am 31 years old and from Pico Rivera, California. I have always believed in God but never was fully aware that he cared about me and wanted a relationship with me. I have been through a lot of struggles in my life, and suddenly found myself at Christ First Baptist Church in August of this year. My cousin Robert is a pastor there and I see the work God has done in him and his family's life. I wanted to accept Christ in my heart and did so in August of this year at Christ First!

I want to take the next step and get baptized with my family on Sunday! This is a huge day for me and my family, and I can't wait to make a public stand for Christ! This I feel will complete my transformation as a Christian, and is something that I have wanted to do since August!



Carissa Laing

My name is Carissa Laing and I am eight years old. I became a Christian when I decided to follow God. My small group leader and my mom and dad helped me to become a Christian. I love Jesus because he died on the cross for us. I love God and want to follow him more and that is why I'm choosing to be baptized.



Chloe Ruiz

My name is Chloe Ruiz and I am ten years old. I became a Christian when I was in church. My niño helped me to understand what God did for me and how important it is to become a Christian. Today, I love Jesus because He died for my sins. I want to live a new life with Jesus and have asked him into my heart.



Jeremiah Foote

My name is Jeremiah Foote and I am eleven years old. I became a Christian when I decided to follow the Lord. My mom and dad helped me to understand what a Christian is and to know God better. Today, I love Jesus because he died for us and our sins. I want to be baptized today because I want to let others know that I love Him.



Sophia Ruiz

I am seven years old and I became a Christian when I asked God to be my friend. My mom and dad helped me to understand what a Christian and what Jesus did for me. Today, I love Jesus because he made me and died for me. I want to be baptized because I want to start a new life with Jesus.

Lorena Martinez



My name is Lorena Martinez, I'm 36 years old and I have a boy who is 5; his name is Gregory. I was baptized when I was a baby so I don't really remember that day. I grew up Catholic and I was sure that I knew Christ, but in retrospect I can now say that I know *of* Christ, I didn't know Him. During my childhood, when I thought of Christ, I thought of fear...if you sin, God would punish you and you'd go to hell so I was always afraid of Him. Nevertheless, this did not stop me from sinning. As I grew up, Church and Christ became an obligation. I would go to church because it was the thing my family did on Sundays when we had time to go. As time passed I stopped going to church and didn't care that my family was unhappy with my choice and I stayed away from church for over 10 years.

Four months ago, my husband moved out of our house and everything good in my life came crumbling down. I was crushed; I felt alone, hurt and desperate. So, one day, my mother came to me and said, "Let's pray". From that day on I started praying and one of my requests to Christ was that He would guide me to a place where I could find help and, in the process, find Him. Funny how my request was not the other way around.

One Friday evening, I was feeling very desperate and went out in search of an open church so I could have some alone time. I tried one church but the doors were closed. I kept driving around and stopped here in the parking lot at Christ First. The doors were closed but I ran into Ruth Sheff and she opened the church doors for me. I went in and I talked to God for about 20 minutes. I asked Him again to guide me to a place where I can find help. When I walked out of the church I saw a big banner that said Celebrate Recovery so I decided to attend and I met some great people. I had finally found the place where I could find healing for my hurts and bad habits. After the meeting I was told that if I liked the group I should try coming to church on Sunday.

That sounded great and with some doubts I showed up that Sunday. I remember singing and tears were coming down my face because I had finally found the place I had been asking Christ for, a place where I can restore my relationship with Him.

Since then, I have allowed Christ back into my life, and my life has changed A LOT. I no longer worry about the little things. Now I look at the glass as half full instead of half empty. And I'm working on becoming a better person. I want to become a person whose life doesn't simply revolve around worldly things, but is focused on Christ.

My journey has just begun and I know that the road ahead is not at all smooth, but with Christ leading my steps, I know that my life will be better.

I have committed to having a better relationship with Christ and I am coming to church on a regular basis. I am making this my priority. Also, I am a faithful member of Celebrate Recovery and would like to thank Ruth Sheff for her leadership, guidance and understanding. And to Arlene Flores for being there for me, along with everybody else from Celebrate Recovery. Thank you to my dear friend Debbie for being such a great friend and to my mother and sister for their love and support. Lastly, I'd like to thank Christ-First for opening its doors and for your faithfulness to God because it has made a difference in my life.

The following is a verse that has helped me through tough times and I would like to share it with you. Psalm 73:23 – 26 *"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. ²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*



Marta Lozoya

I was born and raised in El Salvador where most people are Catholics. I was not Catholic or Christian. I've always believed in Christ, just never got into religion or attended church or understood the importance of God. My childhood was not stable with my parents, therefore I did not attend any church frequently, and as I grew up church still was never a priority in my life.

I've always believed in Christ, just never went to church. I never felt a need to go. Maybe because nobody in my family was a believer, but once I finally accepted my daughter and her husband's invitation to church, the Holy Spirit was immediately upon me. I was so excited for my daughter and her husband and saw the change in their lives and marriage. It encouraged me to see what God would have in store for me.

After a few months of attending church, at an invitation to the altar call, my son-in-law grabbed me by the hand and asked me if I wanted to go up. He would go with me, and I immediately agreed.

After I received Christ, I felt many chains broken in my life. I felt an overwhelming amount of emotions each time I would attend church and even outside of church. I could not help but cry each time at service, but these were tears of happiness for having Christ in my life.

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior" -2 Samuel 22:2



Candy Hansen

A year ago my life was in complete despair, my marriage of 17 years was falling apart, our financial outlook was bleak, and lastly I was given some very bad news about my health. I felt hopeless, and was walking around asking God why, why me, how much more can I possibly take? I was baptized Catholic as a child but never practiced the Catholic faith, and hadn't been to church on any type of a regular basis that I can recall.

My children have always been a part of the Christ First family. I, on the other hand, was a spectator just as in their other activities. I cheered them on, but never took the time to partake in any. Then, about 6 months ago, I came to talk to Pastor Chad & Pastor James. I was looking for some guidance in my life. That is when I started coming to Christ First on a regular basis; I even joined a small group. It was in that group that the pieces of my life started coming together.

One morning, while I was waiting for the bus, I met this beautiful young girl named Justine who was 18. We began talking and she began to tell me how hard her life had been growing up with a mother who wasn't in the picture most of her life. That morning I GOT IT, I finally saw what everyone had been talking about. God was speaking to me, he was guiding me to that bus stop, not for me but for that young girl. He was showing me that He had a purpose for me and it was to be the strength for someone who needed me. I was always praying for God to help me, and for the first time I realized it's not about ME. It's about who I am when I listen to Him, and help others through Him. I remember crying at the realization that He was listening and He was guiding me in the right path. He surrounded me at my new job with women of faith. Therefore, not allowing the skepticism of Satan to lure me away. I also learned that you are rewarded twofold by how you impact other people's lives, and to not be selfish. You must keep your heart open to what He says and make it a point to spread his compassion for others through you. That was the day that I came to know Christ as my Savior, which means I want to follow him better every day by reading His Word and honoring Christ in all my relationships.

Shortly after this enlightenment, all the pieces of my own troubled path came together. I found a place to live, was offered a much better paying job, and my marriage is a work in progress. However, I know one thing for sure, that all of this could not have happened without me being on God's side. I still hit bumps every now and then, and when I feel I can't go on, I just look up to him and pray for the same guidance he gave me that one morning. NOW I know he will be there, He will not fail me, but with out him I will fail.

I would not be where I am today, without the love and support of my husband Tim and my children; Alex, Austin, Amber & Addison. I would also like to thank my small group, Gary & Nadya Selix, Phil & Carrie Esposito and Alcyria. You have on played a pivotal role in my relationship with my Heavenly Father.



Sarah and Noah Urquidi

Before I became a Christian, I lived life to please myself. I got caught up in the things of this world, looking at the world's definition of success as the way I should live my life. I have had so many struggles in my life, and have always chosen to do things my way. I had always believed in God, but never really thought about following him to the fullest.

I have always gone to church and repeatedly would say the sinner's prayer, but don't think I really realized what I was doing until a week after my 31st birthday at Calvary Chapel. The opportunity presented itself and I just felt God's presence with me. I knew that something had to change in my life, and now was the time. I accepted him into my heart, and it's the best decision I have ever made in my life.

Since becoming a Christian, I see things in an entirely different way. I always pray and I have a personal relationship with Christ. I want to be a role model for my children. Not only showing them that a single mother can persevere, but that the only way I am doing it is because He is helping me everyday.

My son Noah is 14 years old and already has a relationship with Christ. He is a part of Calvary Chapel and wants to get baptized with me and his family members to complete his transformation from his old self to his new one. He wants to set the example for his little sister and knows that Jesus commands us to get baptized, and wants to be in line with what Jesus says!

Christ has changed my life, and because of that I want to get baptized. I want to make a public stand for Christ, and am so happy that all my family is going to be there to see it! I have been to Christ First several times, at the request of my cousin, Pastor Robert. I sometimes commute from Murrieta because I love what the church is about. We are honored to get baptized at Christ First Church with 5 other family members participating!



Sade (Leianna) Decosta

Growing up I always felt empty and incomplete. I had friends and family close to me but I frequently felt like something was missing. There was always one thing that made me happy and that was music. At a young age it was always difficult for me to express my emotions but music, it seemed, was more therapeutic. I knew I was given a talent from the lord and I needed to embrace it so I did until I lost myself in the process. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life so I began to lose my focus and, in return, started making bad decisions. Becoming distant from my family also followed. I didn't understand my purpose in life and questioned the Lord everyday.

Until, one day, it felt like the world came to a complete stop when I became very sick and was near death, not once but twice. I was only 19 years old when I had bleeding in my brain. I knew God loved me and I needed to reevaluate my purpose. It took me 3 years to overcome the obstacles and to be completely healed. It was the hardest time in my life but it made me the person I am today and I am thankful. I realized the Lord up above was telling me I needed to change my life. Going through what my family and I went through was a blessing in disguise.

I wanted to do something special for all the nurses, doctors and even the patients at the hospital where I was treated. So I decided to put together a few songs around the holidays and, with my family, sing them in the intensive care unit.

When I saw the look on the faces of the patients, doctors and nurses I was overjoyed to see that I was able to take away a few minutes, just long enough for them to forget where they were and the pain they were in. When I was given a special request by a patient's wife to sing her husband's favorite song I told her I would love to. She told me he wasn't doing well and he is in a lot of pain. I began to sing the first couple words and she became emotional. I then looked at her husband and he smiled even though his eyes remained closed. I was so happy and overjoyed I was able to touch him enough to make him smile. I knew God sent me there.

I have been searching for a church for about 3 years now and I finally found my home. The friends that I have met, the music I have made, the obstacles I have overcome made me conclude I am supposed to live for God. I want to embrace him in my life and to thank him for every miracle he does every moment of everyday of our lives. I've now come to realize that there is not one person more perfect than Christ as my Lord and Savior. Now that I follow Christ I intend to live for him by giving back to people that are in need of assistance and prayer. I will continue to bring the love of music and song to patients that need it the most.

I would like to thank the following people for encouraging me to grow in my relationship with Christ; my parents, my brothers and sisters, my family that loves me unconditionally, my dearest friends that brought me to Christ First, Billy Dee Williams, Rodrigo Estevez, Pastor Chad thank you for reaching out to me, Pastor James thank you for your guidance. Thank you to everyone at Christ First!



Vince Remo

Hello, my name is Vince Remo and I am honored to have Christ First baptize me. I was born into religion with parents who were dedicated to God. We first started out as Catholics then Protestants and finally Methodist. I was never into church so at the age of 18, I left. And so began my journey.

During these times I went through many trials and downfalls. The one thing I struggled with was discouragement. Each time I fell I had a really hard time getting up. I would go into a depression and never follow through with anything. Eventually, I would get out of my depression and start the cycle all over again and never get to the next level. Especially with my career.

Knowing that I am not perfect I took a leap of faith. Instead of relying on my own judgment, which often times was bogged down by fear, and just let Christ the Father guide me through my journey.

One thing led to another which started out with me being hired by Christ First as a drummer. Then before I knew it, I was using my other gifts in graphics, video and sound. And along the way I got to work alongside many talented people such as Steve Miller, Jennifer Fierro, Mark Thiel, Pastor Chad and Pastor James who taught me in ways they're probably not even aware. Using those lessons, the love and patience of God and the gifts he bestowed upon me, I can safely say I have moved on to the next level with my career. Thank you Christ for being there and saving me.

