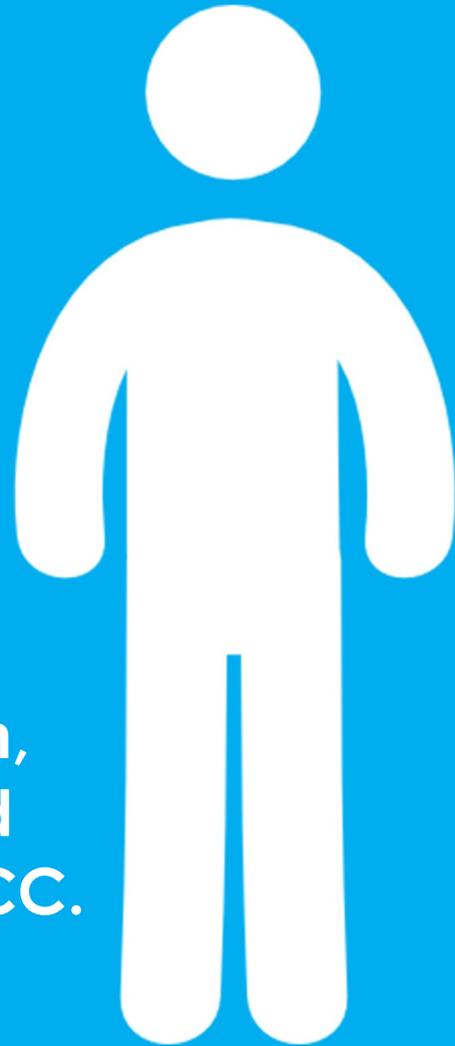


Navigating Your NEXT STEP

Practical instructions
about salvation, baptism,
church membership and
getting connected at HCC.



Heath Church of Christ

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What is your next step?

The purpose of this booklet is to help you determine what God is calling you to do next in your journey of faith, especially as it relates to becoming a Christ follower, baptism and Church membership. We've provided answers to some of the most commonly asked questions by people who are considering following Christ and becoming a part of the HCC family.

We want to hear from you.

While we hope you find this book helpful, we also realize that the most effective way to navigate through matters of faith is by talking it over with someone else. Please feel free to contact any of our ministers by phone (740) 52-8402 or email.

Commonly Asked Questions

Follow the guide below to find answers to some of the most commonly asked questions by people who are considering becoming a part of the HCC family.

I'm new to this. How do I become a Christian and get connected to HCC?

- Check out "How Do I Connect With Christ?" (pages 6-7)
- Go through the "What Does It Mean?" exercise (pages 12-18)
- Check out "Questions & Answers About Baptism." (pages 8-10)
- Contact one of the ministers on our pastoral team.

I believe in Christ and seek to follow him, but I haven't been baptized yet. What should I do now?

- Check out "How Do I Connect With Christ?" (pages 6-7)
- Go through the "What Does It Mean?" exercise (pages 12-18)
- Check out "Questions & Answers About Baptism." (pages 8-10)
- Contact one of the ministers on our pastoral team.

I came to faith in Christ and was baptized at another church; however, the baptism was not an immersion (going under water). How do I become a member of HCC?

- Check out "Questions & Answers About Baptism." (pages 8-10)
- Check out "How Do I Connect With Christ?" (pages 6-7)
- Contact one of the ministers on our pastoral team.

I came to faith and was baptized by immersion (going under water) in another church. How do I become a member of HCC?

- Check out "Questions & Answers About Baptism." (pages 8-10)
- Contact one of the ministers on our pastoral team.

I'm ready to give my life to the Lord and be baptized. Does my baptism need take place during a Sunday service, or can it be done privately?

- You can schedule your baptism simply by contacting one of our ministers on staff. We can arrange both public and private baptisms.

How Do I Connect with Christ?

Our Condition and God's Response

Mankind was originally created to live in a harmonious relationship with God, but man defied God by choosing to go his independent way breaking our relationship with Him. This is referred to as "The Fall" and everyone who sins is fallen and in a lost condition. This condition cannot be remedied by any human effort. But the good news is that God provided a way out of our dilemma through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for our sins when he died on a Roman cross in Jerusalem. Now, God invites all people to give themselves completely to the perfect and reliable provision of salvation through Christ.

How Do I Receive God's Salvation?

We can receive the forgiveness God offers by responding in faith to the work of Jesus Christ in the ways he has outlined in the Bible. The gift of salvation is a work of God's grace; a gift freely given to those who will receive it. When someone enters into a relationship with Jesus Christ according to the standards of scripture, they move from the category of "lost" to the category of "saved." The Bible refers to this as being "born again" (John 3:3-5). Entering a relationship with Christ means a non-believer becomes a believer and a non-Christian becomes a Christian.

By taking a holistic look at the Bible, we see that God communicates several key things which are imperative in the process of establishing and maintaining a relationship with him.

Acknowledgement of Sin: The Bible teaches that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is the root cause of the barrier between a person and God. For a person to admit that they are a sinner is the first step in seeking a right relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Faith in Jesus: Jesus is the only way to a relationship with God and "no one comes to the Father except through him" (John 14:6). The Bible says, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus himself said that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Faith in God and in his son Jesus is essential to a relationship with God. Faith is living with a consistent belief in God and in Jesus as the only Son of God, in Jesus' paying the punishment for sin on our behalf by his death on the cross and his victorious resurrection to life.

continued

Repentance: Repentance is a decision of the will (a choice) to turn away from sin and from sinful behavior. Repentance is a commitment of the heart by one who wants to live in relationship to God. Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). "God commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is vital to living in relationship with God.

Confession: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Part of establishing a relationship with God is acknowledging that he is the Lord, and that he is in charge of this relationship. Confessing Jesus as Lord is an important step because it is a decision to relinquish leadership of your life to the Lord of the universe.

Baptism: The New Testament teaches that baptism by immersion is part of the process to establish a relationship with God. It is critical for those who believe in Jesus to confess him as Lord to be baptized. Acts 2:38 states, "Repent and be baptized everyone one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Galatians 3:27 says, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ."

New Life: When we begin a relationship with Jesus Christ, he makes us new from the inside out; "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17). Our responsibility is to maintain and grow this new relationship. Hebrews 2:1 was written to Christians and says, "We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." It is important to continue growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ until the day that we can reside with him in heaven eternally.

A relationship with God is established through the process of acknowledging sin, having faith, repenting of sin, confessing Jesus as Lord, being baptized and is maintained by living a dynamic daily relationship with God.

So now that you have an understanding of *how* to connect with Christ, ask yourself the following question. "*Have I truly connected with Christ?*"

"Questions & Answers About Baptism." (pages 8-10)

"What Does It Mean?" (pages 12-18)

Questions & Answers About Baptism

Why does HCC baptize by immersion and not by sprinkling or pouring?

The original language of the New Testament was Greek. When the Apostle Paul and others wrote about baptism, they always used a Greek word (verb – baptidzo) that meant to “dip, plunge or immerse.” There are other Greek words that mean “to sprinkle or pour.” If the writers had intended to introduce other modes of baptism they would have chosen the appropriate word. Instead they specified immersion.

A scriptural example comes from Acts 8:38, where Philip baptizes a man from Ethiopia. After the man expressed his faith in Christ, Philip and the man went down into the water, indicating the mode of baptism was by immersion. Immersion was also the commonly accepted form of baptism during the first four centuries of the church and sprinkling was not officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church until the 14th Century.

Should infants be baptized?

We must ask another question in answering this one. Are people born with the mark or guilt of sin already in our lives? Or are people born as a “clean slate” and not seen as sinful in God's eyes until they are old enough to personally choose to act in opposition with what they know God has commanded?

At HCC, we believe that all mankind has a sinful nature or a tendency to sin. However, we believe that God does not hold us accountable for sin until we are old enough to understand that we are in rebellion against him; the one Almighty God. When a person reaches that age of accountability, we encourage them to accept Christ through faith, repentance, confession and baptism.

We recognize that many parents have had their infant children baptized or christened by sprinkling for reasons of making a public declaration of their intent to raise the child to know God. While this is admirable, we do not believe that a newborn baby is a sinner in need of salvation, but is covered by the grace of Christ until the age of accountability and is therefore not in need of baptism. Likewise, newborns cannot express faith and have nothing of which to repent, two items which the New Testament connects with baptism (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38). If you were sprinkled as a baby, in a different faith tradition, thank God for the foundation of faith that your parents laid for you. Now we ask you to build on that foundation with what you know is needed.

Does baptism (water) itself actually save a person?

No. The Bible teaches that Christ saves us. Acts 4:12 states that salvation is found “in no other” than Jesus Christ. However, receiving Christ requires some response on our part. The Bible makes it clear that our response to Christ includes a process of faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Each step is important, but none more important than the other. These then are the ways that we trust Christ for salvation.

- ⇒ Believe (Acts 16:31)
- ⇒ Repent (Acts 2:38)
- ⇒ Confess (Matt. 16:16-18, Romans 10:9-10)
- ⇒ Be Baptized (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-41, Acts 8:36-38)

Salvation in Christ is a process that has a beginning point, includes these steps, but is not fully completed until Christ returns at his second coming at the end of the time. There are many biblical reasons to be baptized including the washing or cleansing of sin (Acts 22:16), to publicly declare one’s faith in Christ (Colossians 2:12), to be obedient like Jesus (Matthew 3:15) and to do what the Bible commands (Acts 2:38, 10:48). At HCC, we rejoice with everyone who acts on this crucial biblical step in response to what God has revealed in His word.

Do you believe that those who have accepted Christ as Savior, but have never been immersed, are saved?

First, we should understand that in the early church no one accepted Christ without being baptized. The closest example we might find in scripture of a believer who was un-immersed is Apollos in Acts 18:24-26. Apollos was a very intelligent man who had great fervor about his relationship with Jesus. But he had not been taught correctly about baptism. He was instructed by a Christian couple named Priscilla and Aquila and was willing to adjust his understanding and then he submitted to Christian baptism. Priscilla and Aquila did not judge him, but taught him. That is our position as well. It is not our place to determine whether someone is saved – that is reserved for God alone. Our job is to teach everyone everything the Bible says.

Continued

Isn't baptism just a "work?" And doesn't the Bible say that we are not saved by works?

Baptism is a work, but it is a work of faith by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness (John 6:29). It is a work that God has ordained that demonstrates a commitment to Christ alone as our Lord. It is God's work in that through the process of salvation he works forgiveness, cleansing and the power of the Holy Spirit into our lives. We are not saved by our own works, but by the work of God through Christ. Baptism is a work of God that he invites us to participate in through faith in Jesus Christ.

Can I be a member of HCC and not be baptized?

Baptism was an ordinance in the New Testament church (Matthew 28:18-20); therefore it is in ours as well. In the New Testament everyone who accepted Christ was baptized into Christ. Through their participation in baptism, they became members of the church. At HCC we believe in following the scriptural example as closely as possible. Thus, all those who have chosen to be members at HCC have been immersed into Christ, either here or at another church. We recognize that other churches do not have this position, but we make no judgment regarding their practices.

Are there specific Bible passages that I can study to help me understand this issue?

The book of Acts in the New Testament records the start of the church. Therefore, this book has the most passages of scripture teaching us about baptism. Specifically see Acts 8:12, Acts 8:36-39, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 16:13-15, Acts 16:30-34, Acts 18:7-8, Acts 22:14-16.

Other passages in the New Testament include I Peter 3:21, Colossians 2:11-12, Romans 6:1-4, John 3:16-23, Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 3:15, I John 2:4-6.

How do I schedule my baptism at HCC?

You can schedule your baptism simply by contacting one of our ministers on staff. We can arrange both public and private baptisms. The water is always warm and ready! May God bless you as you continue to seek Him!



What does it mean?

(A Guided Study About Becoming a Christian)

This section of *Navigating Your Next Step at HCC* is a simple tool designed to allow God to speak to you through what is written in the Bible. Simply follow the instructions below and see what happens.

Instructions

1. Pray that God will speak to you.
2. Look up and read the verses.
3. Honestly answer each question.
4. Decide how you will respond.

Read This Before you continue. . .

The Greatest Gift --Christians believe that Jesus Christ took the punishment for the sins of all humanity when He died on the cross. They also believe that by rising from the dead three days later He proved that He is the Son of God and provided a way for everyone to be saved from sin. This, Christians believe, is the greatest gift ever given.

John 3:16-17 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

About being a Christian—You've probably noticed that Christianity is defined in many different ways.

At its root, the word *Christian* means "belonging to Christ." When you decide to become a Christian you are, in essence, saying "I want to belong to Jesus."

About the Bible —Christians believe that the Bible is the inerrant (no mistakes) Word of God. The Bible is the tool God has chosen to clearly communicate His values, commands, warnings, promises and desires for all people.

If you're interested in receiving the greatest gift and if you want to know what it means to belong to Jesus, then slowly and prayerfully go through this workbook. Read the Bible verses as if God is speaking directly to you, then honestly answer the questions.

Let the adventure begin. . .

1: What does it mean to have faith?

Hebrews 11:6

How important is faith to God?

James 2:14; James 2:26

How does God define faith? Is faith just believing something in your mind, or is there something more involved?

Faith in the Bible (The Word of God)

Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105

Do you believe what these verses say about the Bible?

Psalm 119:106

How does the person who wrote this verse respond to the Word of God?

Are you willing to respond in the same way?

Faith in Jesus (God's Son)

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

According to this verse, what is the most important thing to believe about Jesus Christ?

Do you believe these claims about Jesus?

Are you willing to do as he instructs?

2: What does it mean to repent?

Acts 17:30

According to this verse, who is God calling to repent?

In the Bible, to repent means to turn away from one thing and turn towards another.

Using the verses below list the things God calls us to turn away from and the things he calls us to turn towards.

Turn Away

Galatians 5:19-21

Colossians 3:5-10

Turn Towards

Galatians 5:22-25

Colossians 3:12-15

If you followed the instruction in these verses how would your life change?

How willing are you to make those changes?

There's no way____

I'm willing to right now____

I'm willing, but it will be difficult____

3: What does it mean to confess Jesus?

Confess: To acknowledge something is true.

Matthew 10:32-33

According to these verses how important is it to Jesus that people acknowledge Him?

Romans 10:9-10; Romans 10:13

According to these verses what does it mean to confess Jesus?

Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:11-12

Do you ever feel nervous about the prospect of stating your belief in Jesus before a group of people?

Are there times you are tempted to hide your faith as if you are ashamed of it?

4: What does it mean to be baptized?

Baptize: To dip, to plunge, to immerse.
*according to the Greek definition.

Acts 2:38

In this verse, what word comes before the command to “be baptized”?

According to this verse, who is commanded to be baptized?

According to this verse, what is the purpose of baptism, or what is it “for”?

According to this verse, what do you receive as a part of being baptized?

Acts 8:36-39

According to this account of a man being baptized. . .

Upon believing in Jesus, how long did he wait to be baptized?

What clue do these verses give us about the way he was baptized?

What statement best describes you?

I'm ready right now to be baptized____

I'm struggling with believing and/or repenting____

I'm nervous about the details of baptism (going under water, what to wear, etc.)____

I see no need to be baptized____

5: What does it mean to live for Jesus?

Romans 8:1-2

According to these verses how does God view us after we give our lives to Jesus?

How should we view ourselves?

Romans 6:1-4

According to these verses, what is a person's relationship to sin after they are baptized?

John 15:9-11

According to these verses what does Jesus call all believers to do?

