

Dear Baptism Participant:

Thank you for considering the step of baptism as an important next step in your faith journey with Jesus Christ. We're thrilled that you've offered us the opportunity to walk with you through this exciting process and trust that God will meet with you significantly as you diligently seek to follow him in baptism.

To help you prepare spiritually and practically for your baptism, we've put together this information package that we hope will be a meaningful part of this journey for you. Pages two through six of the package are a brief Bible study that reviews the basic teachings of the Bible concerning our lives and Jesus' role in them, as well as the practice of baptism, its symbolism and meaning. **Take whatever time you need to work thoughtfully and deliberately through these study sheets**, with a Life Team or Ministry Team leader or member, a Christian friend or mentor guiding you through this process of discovery and answering any questions you may have along the way.

Pages seven and eight are intended to help you compile "Your Story with God", your personal spiritual history of God's involvement in your life. Use these two pages as a guide to help you discern which portions of your story have been most relevant and meaningful to you as you reflect on your life with God. Once you've answered these questions, **on a separate sheet of paper (maximum two pages) write out your story as you would like to have it told by video on the baptism morning.** (Please do not feel obligated to share anything that makes you, or could potentially make others, uncomfortable!) We ask people to publicly share a 90 second version of their story by video at their baptism to let us celebrate as a community what God has done in your life, to encourage those who have participated with you in your faith journey and to inspire others who may be at a similar place in their own lives. Maybe God will use your story as a critical part of someone else's decision to follow Jesus with their lives!

Having finished the Bible study and written out your story, please **tear off page ten, fill out the relevant portions and return it**, either to the Information Kiosk on Sunday or to the church office during the week, at least three weeks prior to your desired baptism date. (Any registrations arriving later than that may be subject to rescheduling.) At that point, we'll contact you to set up a time for you to meet with a pastor and an elder to share your story, chat about what God's been doing in your life and talk about baptism. Thank you again for considering following Jesus in the step of baptism. May God bless you in the journey of discovery and celebration with him!

On behalf of the leadership of Southridge Community Church

Getting Ready for Baptism

1 God's Vision for People

a. What is unique about the way that God created people? What are some of the qualities of being created "in the image of God"?

Genesis 1:26-27

b. What was life like before sin entered the world?

Genesis 1:31, 2:8-9, 15-17

c. What were relationships like before sin entered the world?

Genesis 2:18, 21-25

2 The Problem of Sin

a. According to the following verses what does the Bible say about who has sinned, what sin is and its results? Do you believe that these verses apply to you?

Genesis 3:1-19

Psalm 51:1-5

Ephesians 2:1-3

Romans 3:23

1 John 1:8.

**b. What do the following verses say about the power of the presence of sin in our lives?
How do you see the presence of sin in your life?**

Romans 7:18-20

Galatians 5:19-21

Matthew 25:41-45.

c. What is the eternal consequence for not letting Jesus deal with our sin in this life?

Romans 5:12

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10

Matthew 25:46

2 The Solution of Jesus

a. According to the following verses What did God send Jesus into the world to do for us? What do we need to do to experience his grace in our lives?

John 3:16

1 John 1:9

2 Corinthians 5:15

b. Can we deal with the destructiveness and consequences of sin in our lives by just trying to be good people? Is it possible to be “good enough” to save ourselves? What do these verses say about how we can get right with God?

Ephesians 2:8-9

c. How do these verses describe how Jesus creates life change in us?

Ephesians 2:10

2 Corinthians 5:17

Philippians 2:12-13

Galatians 5:22-23

Matthew 25:31-40

d. What do we need to do to experience this new life in an ongoing way?

Colossians 2:6-7.

e. Once we have received Christ's life as a gift how confident can we be that he won't let go of us? Will Jesus give up on us if we "sin too much" or if our sins are "really bad"?

John 10:27-30.

3 The Symbol of Baptism

a. What does this verse say about baptism? As far as Jesus is concerned, who needs to experience baptism?

Matthew 28:19-20.

b. When a person is baptized, they are lowered into the water and then lifted out again. With this in mind, what do these verses tell us that baptism symbolizes?

Romans 6:3-7

c. When should a person get baptized? Do we have to wait until we have straightened out the “issues” in our lives?¹

Acts 2:37-38, 41

Acts 8:35-38

Acts 16:29-34

¹ Note: Baptism is not what “saves” people from sin, though some verses seem to suggest it. You’ve already read a verse above that says clearly that we are not saved by any deed we do (including baptism; Ephesians 2:8, 9). Baptism is the outward, public symbol and a natural act of obedience acknowledging the fact that Jesus has forgiven us and is changing our hearts and lives.

4 Your Story With God

Please describe your experience with God by touching on the following elements of your story:

- a. Briefly describe your spiritual life before you decided to trust Christ: What kinds of choices were you making? What were the consequences of those choices?

- b. When/how did things start to change? How did God begin to break into your life and make a difference? How did you first notice that God was changing you?

- c. When/how did you finally decide to turn your will and life over to Jesus?
When/how did you decide to make Jesus the forgiver and leader of your life?

d. Briefly describe the difference that Jesus has begun to make in your life? How have you seen your life start to change as you give your life and will totally to him?

e. Why have you decided to get baptized at this time? What/who is motivating you? What do you hope baptism will do for you?

Having just worked through this reflection exercise about your life, summarize these ideas onto a separate page or two, as a brief but concise version of "Your Story with God" that you can share with the church by video. Keep in mind two suggestions as you write "Your Story with God":

1. Please do not share anything in your story that would make you uncomfortable or that would shame, embarrass or hurt loved ones or others in our community. Please only include information that will be helpful for building up you and others who will hear it.
2. There are people sitting in the seats who, right now, are where you were. As you write "Your Story with God", think of it as one (and possibly the only) opportunity you'll have to say to them what you wish someone had said to you about Jesus long ago. Let God use you to inspire them to make some of the changes God is making in you.

Now that you've completed the Bible study material and written the story of how you accepted Jesus as your forgiver and leader, please fill out the registration form below and return it to the Information Kiosk. Following that, you will receive a follow-up phone call to arrange a time for a conversation with a pastor and an elder to affirm your readiness for the step of baptism.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW FOR YOUR BAPTISM

What to Wear

You are advised to wear a dark shirt and pants are appropriate. Clothing made of material that retains minimum amounts of water is recommended. Ladies, we encourage you to wear a one piece bathing suit under your dark shirt. Please wear these clothes to the service and bring a change of clothes and towel.

What to Expect

Please be prepared to meet with the baptizing officiator at the front of the auditorium 15 minutes prior to your baptism service for last minute instructions on the flow of the morning and what to expect.

Just prior to the baptism portion of the service the baptism officiator and all participants will move to the entrance of the baptism pool backstage. The baptism officiator will enter the pool first to make introductory comments and then invite the participants one by one into the baptism pool.

When it is your turn to be baptized, you will enter from backstage into baptism pool and move to the front. You will meet the officiator at the front of the pool. The officiator may dialogue with you briefly or ask you a question regarding your decision to accept Christ. For example, "Mary, have you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior?" or "John, have you died to self and given your life to Christ?"

After you say "Yes," the officiator will say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." The pastor will then immerse you backward into the water. This is quick; do not worry, you won't be underwater long. You will need to bend your knees, to assist the officiator in lowering you down and lifting you up. Afterwards, someone will direct you to an appropriate location for purposes of toweling off and changing into a new set of clothing.

SOUTHRIDGE BAPTISM REGISTRATION FORM

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this registration form. The following information is needed for purposes of accuracy on your baptism certificate and to assist us in coordinating the remaining steps of your baptism process. Please return this form as soon as possible to the Information Kiosk.

Name: _____

Date and Place of Birth: _____, _____

Full Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

1. Which service would you like to be baptized in? You may be asked to be baptized at the service you did not choose depending on the number of baptisms scheduled for that day.
 - 9:15 am
 - 11:00 am

2. Are you connected to a Southridge Life Team or support group?
 - Yes. My team leader is: _____
 - No

3. Do you serve on a Southridge ministry team?
 - Yes. The team I serve on is: _____
 - No

Office Use Only:

Meeting with pastor and Elder _____:

Time: _____

Date: _____

Taping of video testimony:

Time: _____

Date: _____