

Baptism

Introduction

Someone gave you this study because you recently started asking questions about baptism. You may think you are ready to be baptized or you might just want to learn more about it. Either way, this study should help answer your questions.

Although you could do this study by yourself, it is better (and a lot more fun!) if you do it with a trusted Christian adult. Good choices would be a parent, grandparent, Bible school teacher or minister. During this study, I will call that person your study adult.

In this study, we will not only look at baptism, but also a few other important responses that Jesus invites us to when we make a decision to follow him (Repentance, Belief, and Receiving the Holy Spirit). These lay the foundation for a healthy Christian life and journey with Jesus.

Let's get started by finding out what you are thinking and feeling about baptism right now. This will help your study adult make sure you learn everything you want and need to know. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers, so make sure you answer them the way you really feel right now. When you are finished answering the questions, discuss your answers with your study adult.

Introductory Questions

1. Why are you interested in baptism?

2. What questions do you have about baptism or being a Christian?

3. What concerns or fears do you have about baptism or being a Christian?

4. What other questions do you hope are answered in this study?

Repent

To repent of a sin means more than just being sorry for what you did. It means that you want to try and never commit the sin again. It means you are turning away or turning your back on that sin, and choosing to follow Jesus instead. Often, it may also mean doing whatever you can to correct the mistake you made. Zacchaeus is a good example of someone who understood repentance. (See Luke 19:1-10) When he met Jesus, he not only promised to stop stealing but also to repay four times the amount of money he had stolen.

Part of becoming a Christian is understanding you have sinned and need God's forgiveness. You may have heard about a criminal or a drug addict who repented of their sins and became a Christian. You don't have to

commit what the world considers “big” sins to repent. Lying, disobeying your parents and using ugly words are still sins in God’s eyes. (See 1 John 1:8)

The most powerful and effective form of repentance is confessing the things you’ve done wrong to another person (James 5:16). This can be an uncomfortable thing to do, but it opens the door to inner healing (James 5:16), forgiveness, (1 John 1:9) and purity (also 1 John 1:9).

Repentance is an important part of becoming a Christian. It is your way of making a conscious decision to turn away from sin and follow Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to repent?

2. Do you need to repent of anything?

3. Have you confessed your sins to another person?

Other Verses about Repentance: Luke 13:3; Luke 5:31-32; Luke 24:45-47; Luke 15:7,10; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:20; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9

Believe

The dictionary says to believe is to have confidence in the truth or the reliability of something. Mark 16:16 tells us that believing is an important part of becoming a Christian. In fact the early Christians were often called Believers. (See Acts 11:25-26)

So what does it mean to believe in Jesus? You could probably list a lot of things, but the most important parts of belief are:

- 1) **Confessing** with your mouth that he is Lord

In Romans 10:10b it says “with your mouth you say that Jesus is Lord. And so you are saved.” (NIV) Read Matthew 10:32, I Timothy 6:12 and Philippians 2:6-11 for more scriptures about confessing your faith.

Usually right before you are baptized, the person who is going to baptize you will ask you to confess your faith. They may ask you to say it in your own words or they might ask you a question. Usually it will be something like “Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God?”

- 2) **Believing** that Jesus died for the forgiveness of your sins, was buried, resurrected from the dead, and that he will return one day to judge the living and the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- 3) **Trusting and obeying** the things he teaches (John 14:21, Luke 6:46, Matthew 7:21)

If I told you to give me a 100 dollars, and in a few days I would give you back 1 million dollars, the only thing that would show you truly believed in me would be if you actually did what I said to do. The same is true of belief in Jesus. If we say we believe in him but don't do what he says, our belief is not true.

As Christians we will not be perfect in our obedience, but it's important for us to do our best to follow Jesus' teachings and allow his Spirit to help us grow.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to believe?

2. What are some important things God wants us to believe?

3. What does a person need to confess at her baptism?

4. How comfortable are you with saying (and meaning) those words?

Other Verses about Belief: John 12:44-45; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 8:1-15; John 3:16-18; John 4:42; John 6:28-51; John 10:25-30; John 14:9-11

Baptism

The word baptism comes from the Greek word “baptizo”. It means to immerse or bury something in water. When someone is baptized, they are “buried” under the water, just as Jesus was buried in the tomb after His crucifixion. In Acts, when you read about people becoming Christians they were all baptized.

Christ’s death on the cross was the perfect sacrifice. His death, burial and resurrection were necessary so our sins can be forgiven. Baptism is a way that we identify and unite ourselves with Christ in his death and resurrection.

In the New Testament baptism is described as:

- 1) Burying your old sinful self (Romans 6:3-4)
- 2) Being raised to new life in Christ (Romans 6:5)
- 3) Being born again (John 3:5; Titus 3:4-7)
- 4) Receiving a clean conscience (1 Peter 3:21)

Read Romans 6:3-13. The act of baptism is burying your old sinful self and rising out of the water to a new life. A life where your previous sins have been forgiven. A life where Christ’s blood continues to cover you. A life where you will have the Holy Spirit to help you in your new walk.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for Christians to get baptized?

2. What happens when someone is baptized?

Other Verses about Baptism: Acts 22:16; Acts 16:25-34; Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26; Col. 2:12; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12-13; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:48; Acts 16:15; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16

Receive the Holy Spirit

In the Bible, often around the time of their baptism, people received the Holy Spirit. Often times this happened as a result of a Christian laying hands on them and praying for them.

In the New Testament, often people knew they had received the Spirit because they spontaneously prophesied or spoke in tongues, but the Bible shows us that these aren't the only forms of evidence that the Holy Spirit is in you.

Some other forms of evidence that you have received the Holy Spirit is that you feel a strong confidence in your heart that Jesus is with you, a strong boldness to share with others about Jesus, that you receive dreams or visions or that you receive a new ability from God (See 1 Corinthians 12). This evidence will be different for each person based on what gift God wants to give them.

The Holy Spirit teaches us, and guides us to become more like Jesus. He can work through us to heal the sick, prophecy, perform miracles, and

know things that we wouldn't know with our natural minds. But more importantly, He helps us grow in love and character as we submit to Him, read His word, and follow His leading.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for Christians to receive the Holy Spirit?

2. How do we know we have received the Spirit?

Other Verses about The Holy Spirit: John 3:5; Acts 19:1-6; Romans 8:5-17; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; 1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Cor. 12; 2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13; Jude 20; Acts 5:32; John 14:15-27; John 16:5-15; Mark 16:17-19

FAQs about Baptism

1. Will my clothes get wet? If you are being baptized in a church building, there will be special clothes for you to wear when you are baptized.

2. What about the man baptizing me? He will usually wear special pants called waders to keep his clothes dry. (Often his shirt gets a little wet though!)

3. Does the preacher have to baptize me? In most congregations any Christian man is allowed to baptize people. That means that you can be baptized by your father, Bible school teacher or other special adult as long as he is a Christian. Of course your minister would love to baptize you too!

4. How do they get me under the water and can I hold my breath? Usually the person baptizing you will tell you what he is going to say right before he baptizes you. He will probably give you a signal when he wants you to bend your knees and hold your breath. Just relax and let him worry about getting you under the water and back up again. (It only takes a second or two!)

5. Where does the door next to the baptistry go? It leads to a special room where you can change your clothes. Usually your parent, a Bible school teacher and others close to you (only women if you are a girl and men if you are a boy) are also allowed in the room with you. There is usually a private area like a department store dressing room where you can change clothes without anyone seeing you.

6. How do I get dry? The room has clean towels and usually a blow dryer if you want to dry your hair. (Some congregations have swimming caps if you want to keep your hair dry.)

7. Will I feel weird or will something strange happen when I come up out of the water? Every- one is different in their experiences. Most people I have known mentioned that they felt really clean inside because they knew their sins had been forgiven. Most people also mention feeling joy, happiness or excitement.

8. Do I have to understand everything in the Bible to become a Christian? No. I doubt that there is anyone alive who would claim to totally understand everything in the Bible. Remember, the New Testament had not even been written down when the first Christians were baptized. Many were baptized after hearing only one sermon.

9. What is that sentence the person says right before he baptizes you?

Usually, he will say something like, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

10. Do I have to be perfect after I am baptized? The Bible says the only person that never sinned was Jesus Christ. (See Hebrews 5:9 and I Peter 2:22) No one is perfect after their baptism, just like no one is perfect before their baptism. The difference is that after baptism, Christ’s blood continues to cover your sin. (See “What Happens When I Sin as a Christian?” for more details of what to do when you sin after baptism.)

11. What happens after I am baptized? That is when your life as a new Christian begins. The next sections will give you some information to get you started.