

# Baptism



## The Believer's Rite

by Mitch A. Schultz

# LEADER'S GUIDE

Welcome. You have the opportunity to invest in the life of a new believer. You will find there is no greater privilege than directing him or her, to this important step of baptism. Here is how you can make the most of this study:

1. Meet with the student to discuss the approach you will take in this study. Develop a time schedule and let nothing get in the way. Plan on completing the study in at least four to five weeks, looking at one lesson per week.
2. Encourage your student to work through as much of the lesson on his own. During your meeting go over their answers and discuss the general content of that lesson. This study is designed to answer any questions they might have about baptism and the Christian life.
3. This study is also designed to deal with any “unfinished business” in the student’s lives. After the study you should be able to clearly discern their level of readiness for baptism and determine where they are spiritually. For example: is there any unforgiven sin, or lack of assurance, or even uncertainty of salvation?
4. Once you have completed the study, encourage the student to tell their life story to you. Opportunities should also be sought to tell this story in a formal setting. This can be done during a church service or in a one-on-one situation. The “Telling Your Story” section can be the most vital lesson in this study. Spend a good deal of time on this. Encourage the student to work through an outline of their story first, and then, with your help, fill in the details.

# Table of Contents

LESSON 1	What Is Baptism?	page 4
LESSON 2	Why Be Baptised?	page 9
LESSON 3	Concerns Over Baptism	page 13
LESSON 4	Telling Your Story!	page 16

# LESSON ONE

## What is Baptism?

Have you attended a baptism? What were your impressions? Was it significant to you? Did you understand what was being done? List any questions you have concerning baptism. (use the notes section on page 18 if you need more space)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

A. The word “BAPTISM” originates from the Greek word, “*bapto*” which means “to dip, plunge or immerse”. In early times, the term drew its spiritual association from the idea of cleansing. A garment was dipped into water to clean it or in some cases to dye the garment. The notion of spiritual cleansing, is strengthened by this early analogy. When we talk about being washed in the blood of Christ we cannot help but visualise filthy garments being dipped into something to make them clean.

B. In the Old Testament, baptism was a common practice but also a requirement of the law. It was best understood as an induction into the Jewish faith for a Gentile, and as a necessary part of cleansing from infectious disease for a Jew. (See Leviticus 14:8).

Those entering the Jewish faith were “expected to strip themselves of their former clothing, submit to circumcision, and bathe themselves completely, after which they were recognized members of the Jewish community.” (Basic Christian Doctrine p.256) The New Testament concept of cleansing was built upon this Old Testament practice. John the Baptist came proclaiming a baptism of repentance and preparation. (Luke 3:3) When Christ came to be baptized by John, (Matt. 3:13) he did so in order to “take his stand with sinners. Although he was sinless, he provided a link between the symbol (Old Testament) and the fuller significance implied in the final commission to his disciples.” (Matt. 28:19). (B.C.D. p.256).

C. Today, baptism is a way of identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Beginning in the New Testament, baptism was a “rite by which a professed believer was inducted into the fellowship of the New Testament Church...By submitting to immersion in water...he/she confessed publicly his/her need of cleansing from sin and faith in Christ.” (B.C.D. p.255) (see also Romans 6:1-7 and Acts 2:38).

D. It is clear from both the Old Testament concept of preparation and repentance and the New Testament concept of identification in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, that baptism must be looked upon as an important element of the believer's walk today. While baptism is not what saves us (only the death, burial and resurrection does that), it is nevertheless

- an important step in understanding and experiencing what Christ did for us, and
- an important opportunity to express publicly that we have been washed in the blood of Christ.

*“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ.”*  
(Titus 3:5,6)

## BAPTISM: THE BELIEVER'S RITE

E. There is a simple way to illustrate the relationship of our baptism to the redemptive work of Christ. Each stage of the baptism ceremony symbolizes an aspect of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Read over Romans 6:1-10 before you review the diagram below:

STAGE	ONE	TWO	THREE
The Actual Event	The <b>Death</b> of Christ	The <b>Burial</b> of Christ	The <b>Resurrection</b> of Christ
How the ceremony identifies with that actual event.	At conversion we choose to die to ourselves in order to live in Christ. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us. ( <i>Gal.2:20</i> )	While immersed in water we are reminded that our old life is buried with Christ. Sin no longer rules in our life.	When we emerge from the water we can rejoice that we have new life in Christ. We can celebrate our new life.
Romans 6 says	<i>"Our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with." v. 6</i>	<i>"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death..." v 4 "In the same way count yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." v.11</i>	<i>"If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection." v.5</i>

Baptism is a picture of real events. **The real events are the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Our obedience to the call to baptism becomes a step in acknowledging that Jesus died and was raised so that we might die to ourselves and be raised with him into new life.

## Looking Deeper

Read over Psalm 51. This Psalm was written by King David as a song of praise to God for his forgiveness (forgiveness is the cancelling of debt) toward David after David's act of adultery in 2 Samuel 11. Write down the images that communicate forgiveness in each verse:

verse 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

verse 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

verse 7: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

verse 10: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

verse 12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

verse 15: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# LESSON TWO

## Why Be Baptised?

There are essentially two reasons for believers to be baptized:

1. The Lord has commanded it!

2. The example in the New Testament points to its importance!

1. The Lord has commanded baptism as a part of his commission to his disciples.

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 28:19)*

In Acts 2:38, Peter in response to the cry of a sincere seeker commands him to “repent and be baptized”. Peter’s words, along with the commission of Christ, strongly indicate that baptism, while not a condition for salvation, is yet a necessary step to understand the conversion experience. Likewise the strong usage of the word “ordered” in Acts 10:48 (and Acts 2:38) reinforces the early Church’s commitment to baptism as an important experience of conversion.

*“...so he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”*

2. The example of baptism particularly in the book of Acts clearly illustrates its importance in the forming of the early Church. We have no reason to believe that this practice is to be less important in our contemporary Church age. While only a few verses command baptism, the fact that baptism was so naturally and consistently practised in the early Church warrants our attention. Those who came to Christ were baptized. No one argued! There are few exceptions! There appears to have been a consensus among new believers within the New Testament that baptism was a natural

## BAPTISM: THE BELIEVER'S RITE

---

response to conversion. Take a moment and look up the following verses. You will benefit the most if you read the entire passage. Once you have read the text summarize in your own words what occurred, paying special attention to the part baptism played in the story.

Acts 2:14-41 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Acts 8:9-25 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Acts 8:26-36 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Acts 9:1-18 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Acts 10:1-47 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Acts 18:1-8 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. We must conclude, based upon both the command and the example in the Bible, that baptism is a natural step that follows conversion, although not a condition for conversion. This can be said for the following reasons:

- Baptism offers the new believer a tangible way to identify with and understand the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Baptism is an opportunity to establish in an outward way what has happened in ones heart spiritually. The ceremony of baptism is a monument of sorts, serving as a lasting reminder of an all important commitment made before God.
- Baptism is an important part of joining in the fellowship of other believers. *“for we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body...”* 1 Cor. 12:13. While baptism is not a condition for membership, it offers other believers the tangible opportunity to extend a real welcome into the Church.
- Baptism is an important bold step in witnessing to others. Baptism is the first real opportunity to proclaim before others that “Jesus is my Lord, and I want others to know.”

## BAPTISM: THE BELIEVER'S RITE

---

Read 2 Cor. 5:17 and write below the ways you have become a changed person since being a Christian. Then, list the areas that still need changing.

1. What has changed? (If you have been a Christian since childhood, write down those changes that have taken place in your life as a Christian).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. What still needs changing?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)*

# LESSON THREE

## Some concerns about baptism

### 1. What about Infant Baptism?

Baptism is a step of faith that requires an understanding of the doctrine of salvation. If we are to define baptism as a symbolic act that helps us to identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, then obviously this cannot apply to infants. While infant baptism might give confidence and a sense of security to the parents, it does nothing to the spiritual state of that child. Christ himself attests that hearing and believing are the essential frameworks to accepting salvation.

Louis Berkhof in his book *CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*, says this about child baptism; “We deny the right of infant baptism since children cannot exercise faith, and since the New Testament contains no command to baptize children and does not record a single instance of such baptism.” I would clarify this by distinguishing between a child and infants. Children do reach a stage where they do comprehend, and can articulate what Christ has done for them. A child who has given his or her heart to Christ, and is able to express clearly what Jesus did for him or her, is certainly qualified for baptism.

*“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.” (John 5:24)*

### 2. Are Baptism and Conversion the same?

Some will argue that baptism is a necessary condition to receive salvation. This is known as regenerative baptism. Those who hold to this posi-

tion often refer to Acts 22:16. They would argue that you are not saved completely until you are baptized. This view however, undermines the grace of God. If baptism is essential to receive salvation, it no longer is a symbol, but becomes part of the redeeming act. We are then saying that Christ's death, burial and resurrection was insufficient to save us. We must do more.

We must remember that the reason we are saved is because of God's grace, not by our works (Eph. 2:8,9). Baptism is an expression of salvation, not a means to salvation. No one is saved by being baptized, but those who are baptized must first be saved. We must stress at this point that baptism should never be entered into until the believer has a clear understanding of the doctrine of repentance. Before one is baptized there ought to be clear evidence of a changed life. Very simply, repentance means you stop sinning and start living for God. As a Christian, you are a new person so you begin to live like a new person.

### **3. What is the proper way to be baptized?**

To argue whether the best form of baptism is by immersion or sprinkling is to miss the point. The purpose of baptism is to identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. How one is baptized must be secondary to this. Having said this, it appears from the examples of baptism in the book of Acts, that full immersion was the norm. It could be argued that immersion better illustrates how Christ's blood washes us completely from our sins than would be the case for sprinkling.

### **4. What if I receive opposition to being baptized?**

What if my spouse doesn't approve? What if my parents are opposed to it? What do I do? These concerns are particularly important in light of such passages where we are commanded to submit to our spouses and obey our parents. (1 Cor. 11 & Eph. 6:1-3) Should the believing spouse delay

baptism until the partner approves? Should the teenager wait until they are given the O.K. by their parents?

The following guidelines are suggested:

- God would never want us to delay conversion until the spouse or parent approves. While our actions in the home after conversion ought to be carried out under the umbrella of authority, conversion is an act of obedient response to the calling of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not conversion, but an important and necessary step to identify with Christ, thus a vital expression of conversion. At some point baptism should be sought, but in a sensitive and timely manner.
- Having said this, the new believer ought to be directed and encouraged to use the desire for baptism as a witnessing tool. Baptism can be delayed until the new believer has had adequate time to share with the family what the Lord has done in his/her life. Family members should be invited to the baptism ceremony where a clear message of the gospel will be presented. What an opportunity to begin sharing Christ with those who need Him and who are also close to the new believer!
- Unless there is deep resistance, the new believer ought to prepare for baptism under the instruction of a pastor or church leader. Efforts should be made to invite family to the baptism service. Where there is resistance, the new believer ought to be patient and seek God's intervention. God will never deny any believer the privilege or the opportunity to share what he has done in his life. Many have come to know Christ through this bold witness. After all it is a symbol of the very work that brings salvation to all who seek him!

# LESSON FOUR

## Telling your story

What Jesus has done for you is the most important story you have to share. Putting this story into a concise form is known as your testimony. God wants to use your story to touch the lives of others. When someone becomes a Christian, learning to tell that story becomes one of the first challenges in living out the Christian life. In Matthew 5:14-16 Jesus tells us that we are not to hide this new discovery. *“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In this same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* The apostle Paul showed how he boldly told his story to others in Romans 1:16. *“I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...”*

As a Christian, God wants you to tell your story. There is no better time to develop a pattern of telling that story than before your baptism. In other words right now. There are several ways to tell that story. You can give your testimony during a Church service. You can begin to tell those you know. Perhaps the most effective story method involves writing it down on paper. Once your testimony is on paper, it can be used over and over again. You can share it with a friend or distribute it to your family. In a moment, you will have the chance to put your story on paper. Below is a good guideline to help you through.

Remember, your story could very well lead someone else to Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, it is important that your testimony clearly explains the gospel. Mention what Jesus did on the cross for you. Refer to the blood of Jesus. Talk about God's love and forgiveness of sin.

Here is a basic outline for you to follow to fill in your story:

1. What were you like before you became a Christian? Give a little background about yourself. If you became a Christian early in life, describe the changes that have taken place as you have grown in your faith.
2. What were the circumstances that led you to consider Christianity: books you read, people you met, a crisis, major disappointments.
3. Describe the turning point. When and how did you become aware that your life was not right with God and that the answer lay only in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
4. What has happened since? How have you changed?
5. Through out the telling of your story refer to Bible passages that have been significant to you.

Go ahead now, and put your story on paper in the space made available to you. You may need more space for this, so use the notes section.

## **Telling My Story...**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



