

growing further

My Message to the World

Baptism Weekend

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Water baptism is confusing to some religious people; they believe that in order to be saved from hell they have to be water baptized. Nowhere in scripture is this idea taught. Water baptism is explained in scripture as the first step of obedience that a believer makes after they are saved. It is a person saying, "I belong to God now; my sins have been washed away by the shed blood of Christ when he died on the cross." Baptism is just like a wedding ring: The ring does not make you married but is a sign to others that you are married.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

1 Corinthians 1:14-17 (NIV)

I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1. What does Paul tell us is true in Romans 1:16? Exactly what is the gospel; what is everything that is contained in the gospel message? In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul says that he was glad that he did not baptize (in water) many people in Corinth - why? Then Paul says that Christ did not send him to baptize people but to preach the gospel. If water baptism were necessary for salvation, why then would Paul say this? What does this indicate about water baptism and salvation?

Answer – If water baptism were necessary for salvation, then it would be part of the gospel message, for that message is what people need to believe for salvation. It would not make any sense for Paul to say that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel if it were necessary for salvation from hell.

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. What do you think it means in the above verse when it says the wages of sin is death? Is there anything else that can pay for our sins other than death? What would this reveal to us about what baptism does not do?

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)

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.

3. In the Corinthians passage above, what exactly is the baptism that the Spirit performs? Do you think this different from water baptism? What do you think the passage in Romans is talking about when it says that we have been baptized into Christ's death? Do you think this is talking about the same thing as the baptism in Corinthians? When did this baptism happen? What does the Romans passage tell us we should have because of this baptism?

Answer – The Corinthians passage is talking about how a person becomes part of the body of Christ. The word baptism in the Greek language is baptidzo which literally means “to engulf into, to immerse completely into” and in secular Greek was used to refer to what you did with your dishes after use. Spiritual baptism happens when the Holy Spirit takes the believer and immerses he or she into the body of Christ. It is the same baptism spoken about in the Romans 6 passage, when we are placed into the body of Christ we spiritually experience the same thing that Christ went through. We died with him on the cross, we were buried with him, and we were raised from the dead with him. This is called the doctrine of identification, the teaching that we have been made part of Christ. This baptism was done to you by God the moment you trusted Christ as Savior. Since it is a spiritual baptism, you did not experience anything with your five senses when it happened. If God did not tell us that it happened, we would be unaware of it. This is the baptism that is necessary for salvation and water baptism is a symbolic picture of it.

4. Have you ever been water baptized? If not, why not? What is the purpose of water baptism? If water baptism is symbolic like a wedding ring is symbolic, what do you think it symbolizes? If you are married but never want to wear your wedding ring, what statement are you making to your spouse? If you are a believer and do not want to be water baptized, what statement are you making to the Lord?

5. What does scripture say about who should baptize people? Do you believe that a pastor must do it?

Answer – Nowhere does scripture say that a pastor must be the person who performs baptisms. It seems to indicate that whoever led a person to Christ can also baptize that person. Therefore, if you are a believer, you have every right to baptize another person. If you are a believer, you can have anyone baptize you who is a believer.

MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)

Below are some practical exercises to help you to incorporate the meaning of baptism into your life.

Level 1 Challenge: If you have never been water baptized, sign up for the next baptism by contacting Sarah Beranek at sarahberanek@grace-alone.org. If you have not taken the 101 class, sign up for the class on July 21st as this class explains in detail the Biblical teaching about baptism and you will be given the opportunity to sign up for the next baptism.

Level two Challenge: If when you were baptized you did not understand why you were being baptized, or the reason you were baptized was for the wrong reason, you might want to consider being baptized again.

Level 3 Challenge: The next time there is a baptism, consider attending together as a small group to celebrate what God is doing in the lives of others, especially if a member from your group is being baptized.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what did not. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as, "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spend 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.

- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately, as part of your accountability to the group, you want to commit to personal life change.
- Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessing of success.