



TEEN EDITION

**EXPLORING
BAPTISM**



A 7-DAY DEVOTIONAL

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is physical participation in the spiritual reality of making Jesus Lord of your life. When a person is immersed in water, they publicly identify with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is not what saves you. Your faith in Jesus saves you. The sacrament of baptism illustrates what has happened to a person who has experienced saving faith.

In Matthew 28, Jesus told his disciples to baptize everyone who comes into faith in Him. As Jesus publicly identified with us, we publicly identify with Him publicly in baptism as a picture of our new life.

Here is that passage in Matthew 28 where Jesus talks about the importance of baptism ...:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

—Matthew 28:18-20, ESV

- What are the three things in this verse that Jesus is telling his followers to do?
- Why do you think baptism is given the same importance of discipleship and teaching?
- Why do you think it's important that baptism is a public expression of faith, and not simply a private, under-the-radar thing to do?

DAY 2

WHAT IS "SAVING FAITH IN JESUS?"

Saving faith is believing in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and beginning a journey of transformation with God in our lives. Below are the specific points of acknowledgment of saving faith in Jesus.

- 1. We recognize that God loves us.** The human story begins (Genesis 1-2) with the fact that God created us in love and delights in us. Even with the fall of humankind in Genesis 3, God's love still continues. We see God's love the most as Jesus provides a way for us to reconnect relationally with God and the life He created us for (John 3:16).
- 2. Sin is what separates us from the goodness of God.** Sin is in our nature and in our choices. It is a cancer that has affected all of humanity (Genesis 3, Romans 3:23). Sin is also the decisions we make against God and His best in our own lives
- 3. To become a Christian we each must admit the painful truth that WE are a sinner.** By nature and choice, WE are personally separate from God and in need of mercy to be restored to true life (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23).
- 4. Acknowledge and turn away from our sinfulness allows us to turn to God and receive His grace, mercy, and love.** To repent is to admit our sinfulness and turn away from sin, turning toward God to receive His grace, mercy, and love. We are saved when we receive the gift of forgiveness offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24; Romans 10:9; John 3:16; Luke 19:10)
- 5. Beginning a new life WITH God!** Becoming a follower of Jesus gives us new life in so many ways:
 - a. We get forgiveness and salvation!
 - b. We become members of God's family!
 - c. We have new friends in our life to encourage and support us in becoming and experiencing all God created us for!

Saving faith is the beginning of a journey. It's not just a mental acknowledgment of a few details. It is learning to live life with God and allow Him, daily, to transform us!

Now, here is the key question: **Have you experienced saving faith where you have fully accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior ... or are you in a place where you know that you're close?** [If you're asking about baptism, then one of these two things are probably true ...]

Repentance & Belief = Saving faith.

Are all of these things just ideas to you? Or do you want to turn away from your sin and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Twice Paul talks about the importance of believing something in your heart.

- What is the difference between saying the right things and believing something to be true in your heart?
- What is it about confessing our sins (from the heart) that shows that we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord?
- How does a public baptism fulfill this directive to confess with our mouth our need for Jesus as Savior?
- ***So, do you feel like you've done this, or do you still need to process some things?***

We've thrown a lot of things at you. If at this point, you'd like to stop and process this with us, let's set up a time to do that.

WHY GET BAPTIZED?

A person should be baptized after they have trusted in Jesus through faith; trusting fully in His death, burial, and resurrection for salvation. You don't need to have it all together to be baptized nor do you need to wait to be baptized. Baptism is the public declaration of a decision you have made and marks the beginning of a life-long journey.

WHEN SHOULD YOU GET BAPTIZED?

Once you have accepted the saving work of Jesus in your life, and chosen to trust Him as Lord, the king of your life, you're ready to go public with that new reality!

Here is a biblical example of a new believer getting baptized soon after experiencing saving faith ...

“And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down

into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” - Acts 8:34-38, ESV

The eunuch had no need to “get his act together” before getting baptized. The experience of real faith was enough.

- Can you think of any reason to delay setting up your baptism?
- Why might some new believers feel like they need to “prove” their saving faith before getting baptized?

MY STORY – HOW I MET JESUS

This is the first step toward building your story of how you came to believe in Jesus. That story is what you publicly tell when you get baptized. To say we have a relationship with someone means that, at some point in time, we actually met them. It doesn't have to be fancy, but something happened where two lives came together. It's the same when we encounter the story of God and trust in Jesus.

For day 4, we're inviting you to think about and write down some details of how you came to know Jesus and decided to follow Him.

HOW did you meet Jesus?

What were the circumstances that caused you to ask questions or become curious?

Was there a crisis, or hurdle you had to get over to come near to Jesus?

What caused you to finally say, "I'm in, I trust you!"?

Was there a specific person who was instrumental to your faith journey?

(If you can, try writing down the story of how you met Jesus in 1-2 sentences.)

MY STORY – BEFORE TRUSTING IN JESUS

Special Note: For people who come to faith as adults, there is often a clear “before” and “after” story; they have a sense of the difference between their pre-Christian and Christian lives. If you’re making the choice to be baptized as a young person, you might not be able to discern that story very well. Sometimes, you decide to follow Jesus before you get a clear picture of what your life would be like if you hadn’t followed Jesus.

If you are committing to faith in Jesus before learning what a Jesus-free life would have been like for you, praise God! This section might not make sense to you. If that is the case, feel free to skip it!

If you got a sense of the “night” before your “night and day” turn to following Jesus, the questions below can help you make sense of that story. You may want to use some of the following questions as you recall and capture this part of your life. Write down the answers to help you put together this part of your testimony.

What was your lifestyle like?

With whom were you socializing? What were your activities with them?

What were your emotions in your day-to-day life?

How did you deal with challenges, setbacks, crises?

What did you feel was lacking in your life?

What were your hopes and dreams?

What did your relationships look like?

Where did you turn for help or advice?

How did you satisfy your inner needs? (loneliness, fear of death, insecurity, etc.)

Were there any consequences you were dealing with for your actions, decisions or choices?

Where were you spiritually?

Pray that God would help you remember your story. Pray also that he will give you courage and boldness when the opportunity comes to tell your story – and now you'll be able to do that at your baptism.

If you can, try writing down the story of your pre-Jesus life in 1-2 sentences. We will have you put your "story" together on day 7.

MY STORY – AFTER MEETING JESUS

Now let's focus on the "after" aspects of your spiritual journey — what happened after you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Take several minutes and write down what your life has been like since your commitment to follow Christ. Try to capture how Jesus is uniquely meeting your needs, and what a relationship with him means to you now. Is it emotional? Has it affected your motivations and/or lifestyle? Take as much time and space as you need and don't hold back feelings or emotions that may come up. You may want to consider these questions as you write this portion of your story.

How has Christ made a difference in your life?

How has his forgiveness impacted you?

How have your thoughts, attitudes and emotions changed?

What has changed in your relationships with others?

How does your faith in Jesus affect your hopes and dreams?

Where do you see yourself as part of God's plan to restore the world back to how we were created in the first place?

This part of your story is probably incomplete. Chances are, it's just starting! You may want to spend some time on it. Praying about it and recognize there is another chapter new life that is yet to be written, but don't let that keep you from sharing your faith journey up to this point

If you can, try writing down the story of how Jesus has started transforming your life in 1-2 sentences.

CRAFTING YOUR STORY

Being able to articulate your story clearly is very helpful. Think about the story of how you met your best friend. The story may be a bit complex, but when someone asks you, “How did you guys meet?” It’s great to have a concise and clear story to share.

The last couple of days has been an exercise to help you discern if or how you have saving faith in Jesus.

This exercise will help you prepare for your baptism, but it’s also incredibly helpful to have thought through how you explain your faith, if or when you have an opportunity to explain it to others in life. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are encouraged to, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

On the day of your baptism, you will share a statement that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. It may be as simple as “My name is _____ and I trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.” However, it is helpful to build a statement that tells your story. Here are some guidelines:

- Put together the sentences you wrote down based on days 4, 5 (if applicable), and 6 of this devotional. If they hang together, that works!
- If you’re having a hard time stitching together the story of how you met Jesus with the story of how Jesus has been transforming your life, sit down with a parent or youth leader to process your story.

TIPS

Over the years, we have heard feedback on things that may cause confusion to people as they listen to a story of faith. We have listed some of these things here. Our desire is that you are able to be as clear as possible about who Christ is and what baptism is all about.

1. Not too much detail about drug use, pornography, abortion, sex or divorce.
2. Please don't talk about the sins of someone else.
3. Please do not mention your infant christening. It is important to differentiate between your christening and the baptism that is taking place now. You may not have the time to come back around and make this clear.
4. Please do not say that you have "always been a Christian." This gives the idea that it is something that you can inherit. Becoming a Christian is about making the decision to accept Christ's death on the cross as payment for your sin, not just growing up in a Christian home.
5. Your walk with Christ is definitely a process, but you need to be able to express a point in time that you recognized that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. You don't have to know the exact date and time, **but there was a point when you accepted Christ, and you need to express that clearly.**

HELP!

One of my favorite parts of my job is getting to help people with their baptism testimonies! If you have ANY questions, please call or email me.

Once you're finished or feel like you're close, just send your testimony to me, and we'll talk about the next steps!

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