

Baptism

By W. Madison Grace II

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Using an online Bible search (such as biblehub.com), look up the passages containing *baptize* or *baptism* in the New Testament. Prepare to share with your group a list of *who* was baptized.

Assignment Two

Using an online Bible search (such as biblehub.com), look up the passages containing *baptize* or *baptism*. Prepare to share with your group a list the terms used for the *way* these people were baptized.

Assignment Three

Using an online Bible resource (such as biblehub.com or biblegateway.com), look up the definition of the word *baptize* in a Bible dictionary. Prepare to share with your group that definition.

Scripture to Memorize

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the meaning of baptism and its practice and place in the church.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Imagine sitting around the lunch table at work and one friend mentions that he is going to be baptized. Your other friends then begin to talk about their experiences with baptism. Some were baptized as babies, others as young children and others as teenagers. Then some say they were sprinkled with water, others say water was poured over them, and others say they were dunked underneath water. Hearing all these different versions of baptism, your friends turn to you and ask, "Are all of these versions correct, or is one form of baptism the right way?" What would you say?

What is Baptism?

Read Romans 6:1–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. Are we to continue in sin that grace might abound? In this section of Romans, Paul had been talking about salvation and then raised this question. The answer he provides is related to the concept of baptism, something all Christians have in common. We are to relate our baptism to Christ's death and resurrection.

Verse 4. buried therefore with Him by baptism. Here Paul provided a partial answer to the question, What is baptism? It is a symbol of Jesus' burial and a symbol of His resurrection **so we too might walk in newness of life.**

Discussion Question

How does your baptism relate to the way you live out your salvation?

On Your Own

Read again Romans 6:1–4. In the space below, write what baptism means to you.

Who Should Be Baptized?

Read Acts 2:37–38 out loud.

Studying the Passage

In Romans 6 we see what baptism is. In Acts 2 and other passages, we see who should be baptized. In Acts 2 several important events in the life of the church occur: Pentecost, or the coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1–13), the first preaching of the church by Peter (2:14–35), and the birth of the church (2:37–47). In this last section people hear the gospel.

Verse 37. cut to the heart. The Holy Spirit moved through Peter's sermon to break the hearts of the people. **what shall we do?** The lost then asked the same question the lost sometimes ask today.

Verse 38. Repent and be baptized every one of you. The answer to the question of the lost is

still the same. Peter's answer also makes clear who is to be baptized.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on who was baptized in the New Testament.

Discussion Question

As you consider who was baptized in the New Testament, when did these people receive their baptism? Was it before or after they believed?

How Should We Baptize?

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on how persons were baptized in the New Testament.

Read Acts 8:26–38 out loud.

Studying the Passage

This passage is the story of how God used Philip to lead an Ethiopian eunuch to trust in Christ and become a believer. The Ethiopian had been reading Scripture, needed help in understanding it, was presented a proper explanation, and was ready to commit himself to Christ.

Verse 36. See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized? Apparently, the Ethiopian understood the gospel so well that he was ready to be baptized.

Verse 38. and they both went down into the water. We have already seen that water baptism is a symbol of the believer's faith and is performed after the believer comes to faith in Christ. This passage presents the manner in which baptism should take place.

We see a picture of immersion in the way Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch "both went down into the water." In order for Philip to baptize by immersion, both men would need to already be in water, which is what this passage depicts.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on what the word *baptize* means.

Discussion Questions

How does baptism by immersion symbolize the meaning of baptism we have seen in the New Testament?

How Is Baptism Related to the Church?

Read Acts 2:40–42 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 41. So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. This passage is a continuation of the study above (Acts 2:37–38). Verse 41 shows us the beginning of the church and how baptism was a part of it. The

two parts of this verse need to be taken together. First, those who were baptized were those who had responded to the gospel.

But we also see that these who were baptized then became a part of the church. In their hearts these believers trusted in Jesus. They marked this belief externally by being baptized. This external marker, baptism, was the outward profession of faith that allowed them to become a part of the church.

Discussion Question

How does baptism relate to membership in your local church?

On Your Own

In the space below, write what you can remember about becoming a member of the church—at the time of your baptism. Were you aware that you had become a member?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

According to Acts 2, baptism has been the practice of Christ followers since the beginning of the church. Baptism is an outward act that symbolizes a believer's inward confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

According to Romans 6, the act of baptism also symbolizes the way a believer is to live out the Christian life—as Christ did. The resurrected Christ walked in newness of life. In a similar way we are able to live a new life in freedom because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism marks the beginning of this walk in Christ and is a reminder throughout life of the freedom we have in Christ.

Because this is true, water baptism is only for believers. Since baptism is a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, only those who can profess that faith should be baptized. We can see this throughout the New Testament and especially in Acts 2. People were called to repent and be baptized, and then they were added to the church.

The way we should baptize people is by immersion, that is, by dipping them under water completely. This symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection we have with Christ (see Romans 6). This also is the practice in New Testament passages such as Acts 8 and even in Jesus's own baptism (see Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; and John 1:29–34).

Baptism also is the outward confession of faith to the church. Baptism marks the beginning of a believer's life in the church for the glory of Christ.

Follow up Question

What is meaning of baptism, and why is it important?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.