

LESSON FIVE: BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

SESSION THREE

TO THE LEADER/FACILITATOR

To help you be more effective in leading your small-group discipleship study, we have prepared the **General Leadership Guide** to help steer you through the basics of facilitating a small-group study. If you have not already done so, please read the Guide.

ABOUT THIS SESSION

This is the final of three sessions dealing with the subject of biblical baptism. In the previous sessions, Pastor Rogers reviewed what the Bible teaches about the method of baptism, he explained the historical context for the word, "baptism," and he discussed the meaning of baptism by immersion. In this session, Pastor Rogers discusses the motive that should be in the heart of every Christian before being baptized.

PREPARING TO LEAD/FACILITATE THIS SESSION

Read through the **Session Guide**, and watch the video in advance of the session. Review the **Additional Scripture to Study** at the end of the **Guide**, along with the suggested **Personal Application**. Make sure you print out enough copies of the **Student Handout** which mirrors this **Leader's Guide**.

CONDUCTING THE SESSION

At the beginning of the session, read the **Introduction** to your group, then open discussion by asking the **Reflection Questions** before viewing the video segment. After viewing the video together, you may want to ask for comments before next leading your group through the **Amplification and Discussion** section. Feel free to add your own commentary if needed, but be cognizant of time and do not personally dominate the session. As you read through the **Amplification** section, engage your group by using the provided **Discussion Questions** to stimulate additional dialogue.

As you prepare to conclude the session, review the **Personal Application** for the week and encourage participants to engage in the suggested activity, as well as to read and study the **Additional Scriptures to Study** section. The **Additional Scriptures to Study** section contains questions or reflections intended to guide participants in their respective personal studies. This is best presented as a positive activity designed to help everyone in the group to grow spiritually through the week (as opposed to being presented as homework).

Allow participants to share prayer requests and lead your group in prayer using any of the suggested formats in the **General Leadership Guide**. Remember to provide an atmosphere of confidentiality within the group as participants share.

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INTRODUCTION

Baptism is not some random ritual used to join a church as if it were a club or exclusive society. Baptism carries a very determined meaning which should be in the heart and mind of every person who comes to stir baptismal waters. Sadly, in this era of watered-down biblical truth, baptism for many is something that is expected of them, and holds little more meaning than what is required of them to "fit in" to their families, peer groups, or churches. In this session, Pastor Rogers concludes this biblical study of baptism by examining the proper motive for baptism.

OUR KEY PASSAGE

Romans 6:4-7 "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of

sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you think should be the underlying reason(s) that Christians should be baptized?
- Why do you think a person who is genuinely trusting in Christ would balk at baptism? What are some of the things that might work against people being willing to be baptized?

PRESENTATION OF VIDEO CLIP OF: “What the Bible Teaches about Baptism”

AMPLIFICATION AND DISCUSSION

While baptism is not necessary for salvation, it is necessary for obedience, and obedience is necessary for joy and fruitfulness in the Christian life. —**Adrian Rogers**

Amplification: We have discussed the biblical method for baptism and the biblical meaning of baptism. The method and meaning are important, but without certain inward convictions on the part of the believer, they become meaningless. Without the correct motives for baptism, a person is doing nothing more than taking a public bath. Baptism does not save, and there is no magic attached to the act. However, baptism is essential in the life of a true believer who comes to the baptismal waters with the proper convictions.

For Discussion: What do you believe are some of the different motives people may have when they come to be baptized?

Amplification: The first motive for being baptized is to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord; but not just Lord, which He is, but one’s personal Lord. In other words, “my” Lord. The Psalmist said, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1). As discussed previously, baptism by immersion testifies of a person’s identification with Jesus Christ through the biblical picture of a death and burial in a watery grave, followed by the biblical picture of a resurrection to live a new life. Baptism by immersion is often called, “believer’s baptism,” because it requires a conscious understanding and commitment to follow Jesus as one’s Lord. This is why it is crucial to make sure young children fully understand sin and their need of a Savior, and what Christ did for them by dying on the cross and by rising from the grave **before** they are allowed to come for baptism. Without providing them a full comprehension of the Gospel and what it means to allow Jesus to become Lord of their lives, we are in danger of fostering a false or weak faith that can have eternal consequences. There is no evidence in Scripture where unbelieving individuals or infants were ever baptized.

For Discussion: How important do you believe it is for a person to possess the correct heart-motive before stirring baptismal waters. Does the act of baptism by itself, override issues of the heart?

Application: Not only does baptism serve as a public declaration that Jesus is one’s personal Lord, it serves as a mini-sermon of the Gospel. By picturing one’s death, burial, and resurrection in identification with Jesus as Lord, baptism by immersion actually proclaims the Gospel to all who are present to observe. As Paul said in (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, ... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Without words, the visual picture of the Gospel during baptism is a powerful message to believers and unbelievers, alike.

Last, but certainly not least, baptism is commanded by our Lord. Not only was it the first act of His public ministry where He said, "Permit it [My baptism] to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), but He personally commanded His disciples to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). His first act of public ministry, and His last commanding words before ascending to Heaven should not be taken lightly. As Christians, we have an obligation; nay, we have a requirement, to be obedient to our Lord's commands.

For Discussion: Does the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19) where Jesus commands His disciples to teach "all the nations" (meaning all peoples), to make disciples of them, and to baptize them, apply to modern-day Christians? If so, does it only apply to those who are "called" to be missionaries? Explain your thoughts.

Application: The only way to fully enjoy and maximize the blessings of a spirit-filled life, is to learn to obey the commands of our Lord. No one can experience a genuine spiritually fruitful life without being obedient. A Christian who lives in open rebellion may materially or socially prosper for a season, but is doomed to inward spiritual misery. As Pastor Rogers has said, "The most miserable person on earth is not a lost person, it is a saved person out of fellowship with God." Failure to obey what you know to do is sin, and it short-circuits one's relationship with God. "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Adrian Rogers was fond of saying, "The way to understand the part of Scripture you don't understand is to obey the part of Scripture you do understand. When you begin to obey the part you understand, you'll be surprised how much more new light [understanding] will break into your life."

For Discussion: What would you tell a person whose baptism:

- Was not done by the correct biblical method (by immersion)?
- Did not reflect the correct biblical message (salvation by grace, not by the act of baptism)?
- Did not possess the correct biblical motive (was done without understanding the Gospel)?

For Discussion: Do you believe it matters if a church requires individuals presenting themselves for membership to be baptized by immersion, with the correct biblical message having been conveyed (i.e., that it represented a picture of identification with Christ and that it was **not** necessary for salvation), and that it was done with the right motive of declaring Jesus as their Lord? Why or why not?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

This week in your devotions, ask the Holy Spirit to review the history of your personal baptism to make sure, for the benefit of your personal spiritual growth, that you have been faithful to follow the right baptismal method, message, and motive.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS

Suggested group prayer – "Lord, help us to always honor You by our obedience to your commands, that through our obedience we may be sanctified and set apart for Your service."

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES TO STUDY

The following list of Scripture details the historic, symbolic, and spiritual importance of baptism. Study them well to solidify your understanding of this most important act of obedience in the life of the Christian.

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Mark 16:15-16 “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Romans 6:4-7 “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”

Acts 2:38-41 “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.”

Acts 8:35-38 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

Acts 10:43-48 “‘To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.’ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

Acts 18:8 “Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”

Acts 19:3-5 “And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Galatians 3:26-27 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

ADDITIONAL READING RESOURCES

- Alfred Edersheim, “The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,” (Eerdmans, 1984)
- Elyse M. Fitzpatrick, “Found in Him; The Joy of the Incarnation and Our Union with Christ,” (Crossway, 2013)
- John MacArthur, “The Love of God; He Will Do Whatever It Takes To Make Us Holy,” (Word Publishing, 1939)

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