



CONNECT

FIRST STEPS - LESSON 9: WATER BAPTISM



Objectives

- New believers to understand the significance of the water baptism.
- New believers to understand that water baptism is one of God's commands.
- New believers to understand how to be water baptised according to biblical principles.
- To encourage new believers to take the step of faith to be water baptised, out of their love for God, and their obedience to His command.

Introduction

When Jesus knew he was about to die, He instructed His disciples to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two ordinances as visible reminders. The ordinances are water baptism and Holy Communion. Jesus commanded His believers to participate in them.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19

Why We Should Be Baptised As Soon As Possible?

1. During Pentecost, people were baptised within a few hours of accepting Jesus

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:41

2. The Samaritans were baptised immediately

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.

Acts 8:12

3. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptised on the same day

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?"

Acts 8:35-37

4. The Cornelius and his household

"Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptised with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 10:47-48

From the Scriptures, it is clear that we should be willing to be water baptised as soon as possible. Thoughts like *"I am not good enough"*, *"my life is not right"* or *"I do not know enough of God or His word"* should not deter us from doing so. God knows we are not perfect. All He asks is for us to be obedient, including being baptised in water.

In fact, in the book of Acts we find repeatedly the call to repent and be baptised. These 2 aspects are linked together. Because true repentance is reflected by obedience to Christ commands. The first key command is to be water baptised as a public declaration of our faith.

Why Must Christians Be Water Baptised?

You may be asking, *"Why is water baptism so important? After all, I have been doing my quiet time, going to life group gathering and worship services, and I am even learning to love people."* Here are the reasons:

1. Christ commanded it

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20

2. It is an act of love and conviction of our faith to acknowledge God in public

Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptised.

Acts 18:8

For example, if you have made a good friend, you would want to make this friendship known. You would be enthusiastic to introduce your newfound friend, unless this friendship is not perceived as worthy.

Since we understand the absolute value of salvation, water baptism is a good occasion to help our friends and relatives know of their need for Jesus and our commitment to Him.

3. An act of obedience

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

John 14:21

We are saved by God's grace, not by what we have done. Likewise, the act of water baptism does not help us "score points" with God. Rather, when we obey His commands, it helps us get closer to God and experience the blessings He has intended for us in the first place. For disobedience hinders God's blessings.

How To Be Water Baptised?

Water baptism is conducted by full immersion in water. The Bible does not teach us to baptise believers by sprinkling or pouring water on their heads. "To baptise" comes from the Greek word *ἁπτίζω*⁶ which means immersion. This word was used when pieces of cloth were immersed in dye in order to change their colour.

As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 8:36-39

If water baptism could be done by sprinkling water, as some have taught, the eunuch did not have to wait until he found water; Philip could have sprinkled his drinking water on the eunuch's head right after he believed.

The Significance Of Water Baptism

The act of immersion in water is a physical representation of the true meaning of water baptism. It symbolises Christ's burial and resurrection.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Water baptism by sprinkling also cannot convey the symbolism of Christ's burial and resurrection. Only by immersion does one go under (burial) and come out (resurrection). Therefore, baptism holds significant meaning for every Christian. It symbolises our identification with Christ's burial and resurrection.

Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.
Colossians 2:12

By water baptism, we are declaring and identifying with Christ in that:

1. Our old self is buried and dead through faith in Christ

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised 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.
Romans 6:3-4

2. The dominion of sin in our life is broken. We are able to experience the peace and love of God

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.
Romans 6:6-7

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.
Romans 6:14

3. We have been raised with Christ to live a new life. We should believe and behave as a new person, having the desire to be more like Christ every day.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.
Romans 6:8

Who Should Be Water Baptised?

Everyone who has decided to believe Jesus and commit their life to Him.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 2:41

Should newborns, infants and children be water baptised?

And this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:21

Water baptism is the pledge of our clear conscience toward God. Newborns, infants and children, who have not repented and have not made a personal decision to accept Christ, cannot be baptised. However, children who have an understanding of the good news and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can be baptised in water. Some 4 to 5 year old children may be sufficiently mature in understanding to make their own decision to repent and follow Jesus. They may then be baptised in water. Normally, we prefer to wait till they are older (above 7 years old) to have confidence they have adequate understanding.

There is not even one account in the Bible where newborn babies were baptised in water. Infants and small children should not be baptised in water, since they are not able to make a decision to believe in the Lord. Just as Joseph and Mary dedicated Jesus in **Luke 2:22-23**, we can dedicate infants and small children to the Lord, but we should not baptise them.

Reflection Station

1. Am I willing to be water baptised?

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

John 14:21

To recap, Christians should be willing to be baptised because:

A) It is a command of Jesus.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38

B) We should be glad to proclaim our relationship with Jesus in public. Water baptism is an outward action of an inward conviction.

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:26

C) There is spiritual blessing when we respond to God. We should not miss out on our spiritual inheritance and blessings through disobedience.

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 14:23

2. What can I glean from the significance of this ceremony?

In short, the willingness to be water baptised is an indication of our commitment and desire to grow in God.

Mentor Chat

1. You will be asked 3 questions during the baptism. What do you think is the significance of these questions?

A) Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?

This question is to affirm who Jesus is.

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."
John 1:49

B) Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour?

This question is to affirm the believer's act of acknowledging Jesus as his/her personal Lord and Saviour. Knowledge and acting upon knowledge are two different things.

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.
Romans 10:9-10

C) Do you have the intention to live a new life in God and follow Him until the last day of your life or until Jesus returns?

This question speaks about the seriousness of decision towards commitment and willingness to go on with Christ no matter what lies ahead.

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
Mark 8:34

Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Luke 9:23

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

Luke 14:25-33

After replying "Yes" to all 3 questions, the leader who baptises the believer will then proceed with the baptism.

2. What should I do if my parents do not allow me to be water baptised?

Some of our parents may object to us going through water baptism because it demonstrates that we are very sure of our faith. Many times, they fear losing their children to the church. It is therefore our responsibility to honour our parents and love them. Set a good example at home. We need to assure them that becoming a Christian will help us love and care for them more than before.

Conclusion

In obedience to the Lord's command, all believers must be water baptised. This symbolic event signifies the burial of the old nature and the commencement of a new life in Him. It is a proclamation to the public that we have decided to follow Christ all the days of our lives. Water baptism does not help anyone to be saved from his/her sin. It is an outward action that demonstrates faith in our heart. Therefore, if we sincerely believe in Jesus, we should certainly be willing to be baptised.

Baptism is the initial step of a faithful heart.

Max Lucado

Memory Verse

THEREFORE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTISING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

MATTHEW 28:19



HOPE
CHURCH

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