

LESSON FIVE: BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

SESSION TWO

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 second of three sessions dealing with the subject of biblical baptism. In the previous session, Pastor Rogers reviewed what the Bible teaches about the method of baptism, and he further explained the historical context for the word, "baptism," that is used in English translations of the Bible. In this session, Pastor Rogers discusses the biblical meaning of baptism, and why it is an important act of obedience for every Christian.

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 somewhat downplayed in numerous churches today, with many churches never even stirring baptismal waters. Along with a general decline of baptisms, several mainstream denominations practice sprinkling as opposed to immersion, thereby changing the picture of baptism's biblical intent and meaning. In our previous session, Pastor Rogers discussed the method of baptism as detailed in the Bible. In this session, he will examine the biblical meaning of baptism, and why baptism by immersion is important in the life of every true believer.

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

- Why, as Christians, are we to be baptized? What does it signify?
- Why do you think Jesus, in His last words to His disciples, commanded them to “Go 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 28:10)? Do you believe that is an important command? Why?

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

AMPLIFICATION AND DISCUSSION

The meaning and the method [of baptism] are inextricably interwoven. If you change the method, you will destroy the meaning. The method and the meaning are bound together. —**Adrian Rogers**

Amplification: As we learned in our previous session, the biblical method of baptism was always by immersion. It is not just because the Greek word we translate “to baptize” literally means “to dunk,” “to dip,” or “to completely immerse,” it is because the act of baptism carries with it the picture of our death, burial, and resurrection in identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. As testified by the early church fathers, and as confirmed by the writings of the founding leaders of denominations which today practice baptism by sprinkling, our key verse, Romans 6:4, clearly explains that submission to baptism by immersion pictures a death and burial via a watery grave, followed by a symbolic resurrection by coming up out of the water.

For Discussion: Does it matter if someone is baptized by immersion in a swimming pool, in a pond, or in a church baptistry? Does the location make a difference in the worthiness of the baptism?

Amplification: There are three important truths contained within this verse that every follower of Christ should understand. First, baptism by immersion is an open declaration of one’s identification, by faith, with Jesus Christ; “We were buried with Him through baptism ...,” (Romans 6:4). When we are baptized, we are publically testifying to all who witness the event that we have made Jesus Christ our Lord. We are proclaiming to the world that “... our old man was crucified with Him [Christ], that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin,” (Romans 6:6). As was presented in our previous sessions on “How to be Saved and Know It,” we are not saved by works, but by grace, through our faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). The act of baptism, whether by sprinkling or immersion, never saves anyone; but baptism by immersion serves as an outward proclamation of what has taken place inwardly in the life of a true follower of Jesus. This is not to suggest that every person who has been baptized is a true believer. However, for every sincere Christian, baptism by immersion as commanded and modeled for us by our Lord, carries significant meaning.

For Discussion: Do you think sprinkling or pouring water over someone who has come for baptism adequately pictures a death, burial, and resurrection? Is that even important? Why or why not?

Amplification: Second, not only does baptism by immersion testify of one’s personal identification, through faith, in Jesus Christ’s burial, it also testifies of our identification, through faith, in His resurrection; “... that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father ...” (Romans 6:4). The greatest truth of Christianity is the resurrection of Christ. Without

the resurrection, our faith would be in vain, we would have no hope; “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5). Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of our resurrection to be with Him is the cornerstone of our faith. Baptism by immersion is a picture of not only our eventual physical death just as Jesus endured a physical death, but also of our eventual resurrection in a glorified body as He was raised “by the glory of the Father” (Romans 6:4).

For Discussion: Does the biblical method, coupled with the biblical meaning as explained in this and the previous session, change your understanding of baptism? If so, in what way?

Amplification: The third truth contained in the symbolism of baptism by immersion is a declared determination to, “... walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Our salvation delivers us from the captivity of sin in the fallen world in which we live, but it does not deliver us from the temptation or influence of sin. We are set free from sin’s chains, but we must still endure its presence and must practice the cleansing and filling of the Holy Spirit on a daily, and even sometimes moment-by-moment basis. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Our determination to live a righteous life **because** of what God has done for us is what separates a true believer, from a false. Works never save us, but a Christian’s works are the result of a grateful heart for the salvation God has graciously provided.

For Discussion: In your opinion, what does it mean to “walk in newness of life”?

Amplification: Martin Luther said, “Baptism signifies that the old Adam in us is to be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and perish with all sins and evil lusts; and that the new man should daily come forth again and rise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” Submission to baptism by immersion carries a very significant meaning associated with its method. To dilute or change the biblical method because of culture or convenience, as Pastor Rogers has said, destroys its meaning.

For Discussion: How important do you believe it is to follow the dictates of Scripture and the commands of our Lord in the midst of a culture that is openly hostile to Christianity?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

In your personal devotions, ask the Holy Spirit how you might offer yourself as an instrument of righteousness to God and to others this week.

GROUP PRAYER REQUESTS

Suggested group prayer – “Lord, help us to always walk in newness of life, to live righteously not out of fear or obligation, but out of genuine love for You.”

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES TO STUDY

Consider as you read the following, how God has made all believers one by a spiritual baptism (immersion) in His Spirit which is symbolized by our physical baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

Following Christ is a daily practice of rejecting sin which no longer holds us captive.

Romans 6:6 “...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.”

Ephesians 4:22 “...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...”

As you read the following verses, take time to praise God for the wonderful gift of salvation, grace, and forgiveness He has provided. Commit to live your life by faith in Him, allowing the resulting good works to shine through in praise to Him.

Colossians 2:11-14 “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

James 2:17-22 “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”

ADDITIONAL READING RESOURCES

- Charles Hodge, “The Way of Life,” (Patala Press, 2016)
- William Evans, “The Great Doctrines of the Bible,” (Moody, 1974)
- James Orr, “The Christian View of God and the World,” (Kregel Publications, 1989)

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VIDEO PRESENTATION NOTES

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