



Big idea: Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision.

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17 (NIV), Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV), Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV), Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)

INTRO

[Author's note: If you have been baptized, share your baptism story.]

04-15-07 was the date I was baptized. I was nine years old and a few weeks before I decided I wanted to be baptized. At the church I grew up in we would have altar calls weekly. An altar call was an opportunity for you to come forward and to get prayer for whatever you would like along with giving your life to the Lord. Another thing that would happen during the altar call was telling your pastor that you wanted to be baptized. I had talked with my mom, understood what baptism was and meant, and wanted to go forward with doing it. So, one Sunday a few weeks before 04-15-07, I made my way up to the front during the altar call. I told Pastor Travis that I wanted to be baptized and he embraced me with a big hug. I remember the day I was baptized like it was yesterday. I wore a pair of black adidas shorts and a t shirt. I remember getting into the baptistry and being relieved it was warm water. I remember the words that my pastor spoke over me as a young boy while we were in the water. I still remember looking out and seeing all my church family smiling and supporting me. I still remember looking over and seeing my family recording me with their handheld cam recorder. I then remember being dunked under the water and coming up. I remember feeling renewed, excited, happy, and ready for whatever the Lord was going to call me to in my young life.

TENSION

Baptism is something that you have most likely heard about. You might not know every detail and how it all works but I am guessing most of you have heard of the word. Baptism is something that we talk a lot about around and after summer camps and winter conferences. It is something that is exciting. If you have ever been to a baptism Sunday, you have probably experienced the excitement that they bring. Even though baptisms can bring about a lot of excitement, sometimes it can bring confusion and a lot of questions on how it all works. Here are five frequent questions that I hear come to the surface when the topic of baptism comes up.

Why should I get baptized?
When should I get baptized?
Do I have to get baptized to go to heaven?
Can I get baptized again if I already have?
What if I was baptized as a baby?

All those questions are great and are helpful for us to know when it comes to baptisms. Let's turn to Scripture to see how we should answer these questions and how baptisms play into our Christian faith.

TRUTH

One of the biggest misconceptions, I believe, is when people begin to think that you have to be baptized to “truly” be saved. Let's check out what Ephesians says about salvation:

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

Those two verses show us that it is through faith alone that we receive salvation. Putting our faith in Jesus saves us. It's not works, not reading the Bible more, not baptisms. It's Jesus and Jesus alone.

If baptisms don't save you, you might be asking the question why should I get baptized? Let's check out Matthew to see the first reason.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:13-17 (NIV)

When reading this passage of Scripture, we see Jesus, who was fully human and fully God was baptized. Jesus, of course, is our model for our lives as Christians. Jesus showed us that as Christians we are called to be baptized.

Secondly, in Acts 2:36-38 we see Peter instructing new believers that their next step in following Jesus is to get baptized.

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, 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 2:36-38 (NIV)

In Acts, we see that Peter told people the first step was to repent and believe in Jesus. Once we have repented and have given our lives to Jesus, the next step in obedience is to be baptized.

APPLICATION

So, we know that Jesus was baptized, and we are supposed to follow Him. We also know that the early church was instructed to be baptized after giving their lives to Jesus. So, what does this mean for us? What is baptism and what does it mean to our lives? Here are three words that I hope show you what baptism is and how we are supposed to navigate baptisms.

Expression

Simply put, baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision. What that statement means is that baptism is a way to show the world our commitment and dedication to following Jesus. Our relationship with Jesus is something that is personal. But it shouldn't be private and kept secret. We should be willing to show people how Jesus has transformed our lives. We should be willing to invite people into our lives and for them to see our relationship with Jesus. One way that we do this is through getting baptized.



Big idea: Fasting creates greater intimacy with God and helps foster personal breakthrough.

Scripture: Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV), Matthew 4:1-2 (NIV), Daniel 10:3 (NIV), Esther 4:16 (NIV)

SURFACE

- What would you rather give up forever, Netflix or Instagram? Why?

SERIOUS

- Have you ever done a fast from food or social media before?
 - o How did that go?
 - o Was this a spiritual fast?

SPIRITUAL

- How is fasting beneficial to our walk with Jesus?
- What is the importance of fasting for the right reasons?
- What is a way that you can begin to make fasting a regular part of your routine?

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