

Jesus, Baptism, and Me

A Lesson for Young People Who are Considering Baptism

Dear Parents,

My husband and I raised five children and always struggled with knowing when the kids were ready to go all in on following Jesus. When the oldest was baptized, immediately the others wanted to do so, as well. We didn't want to push our children toward baptism and certainly didn't want to hinder them either. I struggled a lot (and at times still do) with whether a child needs to be baptized at all and what the proper age is. Jesus was baptized when he was thirty years old and in Jewish thought, baptism is consistent with adulthood. I was baptized at twelve and heard many lessons on the "age of accountability" however, every person is different and I would rather baptize a child when they are too young then to put it off and watch them grow out of their love for Jesus. Since children are so easily swayed, they may be begging to be baptized after this lesson. One thing we did with ours was, if they wanted to talk about it after one of their siblings or friends were baptized, we would talk. But then we would ask if they wanted to talk about it more the next day. If they did, we would talk then. When our children told us they didn't want to wait any longer and wanted to be baptized at that time that is when they were baptized. One of my friends and his wife encouraged their young child to read a chapter of the book of Mark a day before her baptism. This not only encouraged responsibility but led her into a deeper relationship with her Savior. Another friend encourages his children to write letters to their future selves explaining why they want to be baptized.

As mentioned earlier, all kids are different and there is no right or wrong answer to this. Try not to worry about getting it right. We won't always get things right but we follow the one who does and he is faithful. I pray this blesses you and your family in this beautiful journey with Jesus.

For the Christ and His Kingdom,

Paula Harrington

Lesson: The Baptism of Jesus (Read Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1)

The baptism of Jesus was so important that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each wrote about it. The four accounts of the Gospel sometimes include different stories about Jesus but this is one story they all wanted to tell. Jesus didn't have any sins so his cousin, John the Baptist (he was called that because telling about God and baptizing people was his job), was confused when Jesus came to the Jordan River and asked to be baptized. John didn't want to do it but Jesus told him this is what God wanted. When Jesus was baptized, God spoke and said, "This is my beloved Son and I am very happy with him!"

Why Do People Get Baptized?

Because Jesus told us to. In Matthew 28:19 after the resurrection and a few weeks before Jesus went to live in Heaven, Jesus said, "*Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you and be sure of this, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*"

A disciple is what the followers of Jesus were called in the Bible and it's what followers of Jesus are called today, too. We might hear the term *Christian* used more but it's ok to call yourself a disciple, too. Disciples are people who followed Jesus around, listened to him, and tried to do all he said. Peter, James, John, Jesus' mother Mary, Matthew, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary and her sister Martha, Lazarus, Phillip, and many more people were disciples. Jesus had many disciples in the Bible and he has many now. Let's think about some disciples of Jesus that you know. Who can you name? We know lots of disciples at our churches and in our communities. It's wonderful to be a disciple of Jesus but it isn't always easy. Sometimes following Jesus is hard. The disciples in the Bible were treated badly for following Jesus. Some of them were even put in jail for following Jesus. That didn't stop them though.

Who Can Get Baptized?

Anyone who believes in Jesus and wants to go all in on following him! It's a huge decision. In fact, choosing to follow Jesus is the biggest decision you'll ever make. It doesn't matter if you're a boy or a girl. It doesn't matter what your hair, skin, or house look like. It doesn't matter where you live or what language you speak. Anyone who loves Jesus and wants to follow him forever can be baptized! When we follow Jesus completely, then Jesus becomes our King! He forgives us of our sins. He helps us make the best decisions in our lives. He loves and comforts us when we're sad or sick.

Where Can You Get Baptized?

Anywhere that has water! In the book of Acts, Dr. Luke (he wrote the book of Luke, too) tells us about a treasurer who worked for the Queen of Ethiopia! He was an important man and he had been to Jerusalem to worship. Jerusalem was 1500 miles away from Ethiopia! That's almost all the way to the Pacific Ocean from Kentucky! That would be a long trip in a car but he was in a chariot! He was reading his Bible and was in the book of Isaiah! He didn't understand what he was reading but God led Philip (a disciple) there to help him. In Acts 8:35, the Bible says that Philip began reading with him in the book of Isaiah and then told him the good news about Jesus! The New Testament hadn't been put together yet so he didn't have a Bible like ours. His Bible was the Old Testament. After Philip explained the good news to him, the man said, "Hey! There's water! Why can't I be baptized?" Baptism is part of following Jesus! Some people get baptized at church and that's great! Some people get baptized in a swimming pool, in a river or lake, in the ocean, or even a bathtub!

Who Can Baptize?

The Bible doesn't say that only certain people can baptize other people. If we look back at what Jesus says (and we always should), in Matthew 28:19 he says, "*Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*" Who was this said to? It was said by Jesus to the people standing next to him but when it was written, it was written to everyone to tell them who Jesus was. We can't hear and see Jesus talking right now but we can read the word of God and follow his words now and we are his disciples and disciples were told to go, make disciples, and baptize.

Who was Baptized in the Bible?

Lots of people! In the book of Acts, over 3000 people were baptized in one day in Jerusalem (Acts 2)! People were baptized in Samaria, Corinth, Ephesus, and many other places. Saul was baptized (Acts 9). Cornelius (Acts 10) and everyone who lived and worked in his house was baptized. Lydia (Acts 16) and everyone who lived and worked in her house was baptized. The man who worked at the jail in the town of Philippi was baptized, too. We don't know his name but I bet it was a cool name like yours. There were lots of people who were baptized!

How We Respond to Jesus

We talk about the Gospel a lot in Bible class and we talk about ways we can respond. Baptism is one of those ways but it's not the only way. Baptism is very important. Remember when Jesus died and was brought back to life? We die (go down into water) and are raised to a new life (brought up out of water). The Apostle Paul (who used to be Saul) said in the letter he wrote to the disciples living in Rome in Romans 6:3-4, "*Have you forgotten that when we were baptized we were joined with Jesus in his death? When we were baptized that was like being buried and just like Jesus was raised from the dead by God's power, now we have new lives, too!*"

Did you see the words ***new lives***? And do you remember when I said that baptism is one way to respond but not the only way? New lives means new ways of living. We are new people! New people who want to live like Jesus. That means we shouldn't be mean to people. We shouldn't laugh at people. We shouldn't hurt people's feelings. We shouldn't be greedy or jealous. Jesus never treated people that way. He loved and cared for others. He forgave them and helped them. He was friends with people others wouldn't be friends with and helped people that others wouldn't help. Jesus said we are to love people the way he did. Jesus knew we would struggle with this new life and living like he does. He forgives us and gives us power to make better choices.

Going all in on following Jesus is the biggest decision of your life. It's not only about attending a church service or helping where you can inside the church building. It's more like enlisting in the Army of God. It's about using the spiritual gifts given to you by God (Romans 12:3-8) to bless others, those who look, believe, and live just like you and those who look, believe, and live very differently than you. It's making a difference in this world and making Jesus look good so that others will want to be his disciple, too.

God calls his people holy, chosen, and dearly loved in Colossians 3:12 and then tells us how to live in that kind of love, *clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience*. In 1 Peter 2:9, we're again called chosen and holy but this time he adds that we're *a royal priesthood, and God's special possession* and then we're told *to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness*. When we go all in following Jesus, we have a new life, a new family, and a new purpose.

All this newness is exciting because following Jesus completely is exciting!