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The Nature of Baptism— Not Simple Water Only

WHAT A MESS!

"It's going to take a lot more than water to get that clean!"

When was the last time you heard that exclamation? What circumstance comes to your mind? What kind of mess was the person speaking about?

The Bible says that our lives are a mess. We are born sinful human beings. Our sinful nature, the world around us, and the devil conspire to lead us into sin every day of our lives. We don't have to think very hard to remember the last time we sinned. Take a mental run-through of this checklist that reviews the Ten Commandments, noting where you have messed up.

- Put God first.
- Honor and praise God's name.
- Hear and follow His Word.
- Obey those in authority.
- Help, not hurt, others.
- Regard others with decency.
- Protect people's possessions.
- Speak well of others.
- Be content with what you have.
- Respect people's relationships.

It is difficult to get a stain out of a shirt, or to clean up spilled paint or oil. It is even more difficult to "clean up" our sin. It takes more than just water. Our strongest personal effort is not enough. But God has provided a way!

WHAT A SOLUTION!

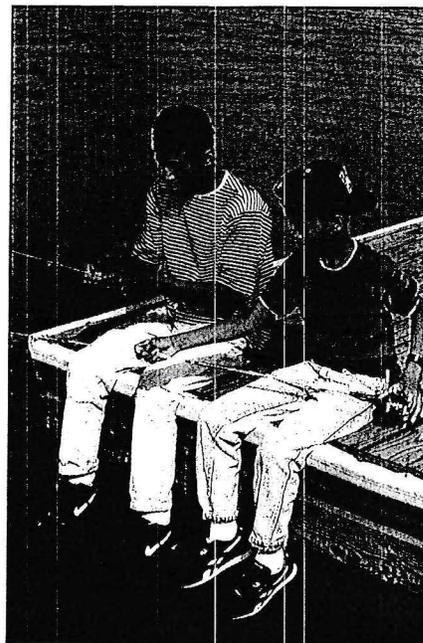
Over and over again in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, we see people who, by God's grace, recognized their sinful condition and the need to be made clean.

1. Read the passages that follow. What sins were being recognized?

a. Acts 2:36-38

b. Acts: 16:23-31

c. Acts: 22:3-16



MY BAPTISM, YOUR BAPTISM

Use the list of questions that follow to compile a "Book of Class Records" on Baptism.

1. The most unusual place of Baptism in our class:

Name? _____

Where? _____

2. The youngest Baptism:

Name? _____

How soon after birth? _____

3. The Baptism done furthest away:

Name? _____

Where? _____

4. The largest number of sponsors:

Name? _____

Number? _____

5. The most recent Baptism:

Name? _____

When? _____

6. Unusual Baptism customs or reminders: _____

7. The next Baptism you know of: _____

8. [Your choice] _____

Many things can differ in the circumstances of our Baptism. One thing remains constant: God works through our Baptism to bring about forgiveness through His Son and new life by the power of the Holy Spirit—He cleans up our lives of sin! Thanks be to God!

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

Matthew 28:19: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Nature of Baptism.





The Nature of Baptism— God’s Command

GO! GO! GO!

Complete the phrase “I want you to go ...” three different ways. Use the words you most frequently hear. Think about who speaks them to you and why.

I want you to go _____

I want you to go _____

I want you to go _____



You probably hear the command “GO” quite often—go to school, go do your homework, go to the mall, etc. Jesus said to His disciples in **Matthew 28:19**, “GO and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

You might ask, Where? When? Now? Who? Not me!

Yes, you! Jesus is speaking to each of us. He is telling us to go to work for Him. We don’t even have to go very far to do it. There is plenty of work in God’s kingdom nearby to keep all of us very busy for a long time. Just a little over half the people in our country identify themselves as Christians; many less go to church or enter actively into the Christian life. Just look around you. What do you see and hear? Lots of people who need to learn about the Savior.

Just as Jesus told His *first* century disciples to begin at home (**Acts 1:8**), He also tells us—disci-

ples going into the *twenty-first* century—to share His message right where we are. (To be continued, later in the lesson.)

COMMISSIONED

Matthew 28:18–20 is called the Great Commission. A commission gives someone authority [the right, duty, power] to do a special task for someone else. Read the Bible verses and answer the following questions.

1. Why did Jesus have the authority to give the Great Commission?

2. What three things did He command to do?

3. What promise did Jesus give to accompany the Great Commission?

We, too, are disciples of Jesus: we have faith in our hearts through the power of Baptism and God’s Word. We, too, are commissioned: empowered by the Spirit to talk about our faith, knowing that Jesus is always with us.

Not everyone we speak to will be immediately converted, rush to church, and be baptized. But God promises that His Word will accomplish its purpose, perhaps in ways we will never see.



BAPTIZE ALL NATIONS

Christ's words "all nations" mean more than "every country." It means that He desires that every person—man, woman, and child—be baptized. Adults and older children (those old enough to learn) are taught about God before they are baptized. But what about babies and children too young to learn?

We baptize even the very youngest children because:

1. they are included in

Matthew 28:19)

2. they are _____

_____ and need God's forgiveness. (**Psalm 51:5**)

3. through the _____

_____ children can _____

(Acts 2:38-39; Matthew 18:6)

4. Jesus loves children and wants to _____ them.

(Mark 10:16)

5. it can be expected that young children were included when the early church baptized entire

(Acts 16:15, 33)

6. Baptism and its blessings are not the result of what we do or what we know, for our faith in Christ is a

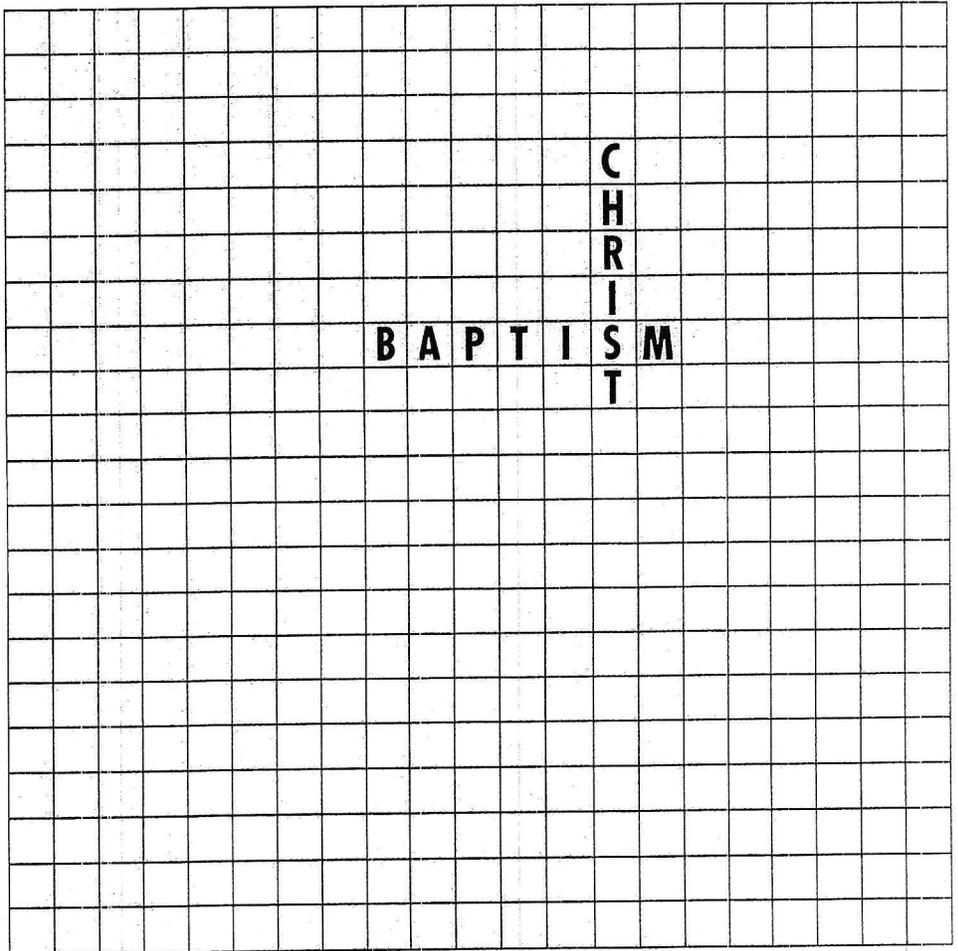
(Ephesians 2:8)

By Baptism, even the youngest children become members of God's family and brothers and sisters of Jesus Himself. In addition, young children can experience God's forgiveness and love for them, and they can show their love for Jesus their Savior. In accordance with God's Word, we do not want to withhold the blessings of Baptism from them!

CONTINUING ON ...

Earlier in the lesson we learned that Jesus wants us to spread His love and Word of salvation right where we are. But there was more to His message. As you read His message, add words to fit your situation. Jesus said, "**You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem** [your city: _____], **and in all Judea** [your country: _____] **and Samaria** [a neighboring country: _____], **and to the ends of the earth** [several far-away countries: _____]." **(Acts 1:8)**

That's a big job; we need to work together; we can work together as a church. In what ways does our church work to fulfill this commission locally, nationally, and world-wide?



Now think about yourself. What can you do now? in your immediate environment? wherever you may go? What can you "tell" about Jesus and the Christian life without preaching a sermon? perhaps without even saying a word? Write some possibilities and turn them into plans.

JOINED TOGETHER WITH CHRIST

Through Baptism, we are joined together with people of all ages and all nations and all times as members of God's family. As a reminder of this, create your own word puzzle. Add your name, the names of your Christian friends, classmates, family members, and other Christians you know to this puzzle. Have names intersect at a point where they share the same letter. See how many names you can join together. This puzzle can remind you that through Baptism, "in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (**Romans 12:5**).

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

Acts 2:38-39: 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.