



BAPTISM

A 5-session OCBC
Discipleship Study

Congratulations!

If you are reading this, I am assuming that you are interested in publicly identifying your life with Jesus Christ through baptism. Baptism is a monumental step in an individual's life as it marks a break from one's past life and initiates the beginning of a life of discipleship.

To prepare you for your baptism, your mentor will lead you through the first four studies in this booklet. To complete the last session, you will meet with either a pastor or a person trained in Spiritual Mentoring.

The purpose of these studies is to affirm your fitness for Christian baptism. In a few cases, people going through this course may find that they are not yet ready for baptism. Please be open with your mentor if you are having doubts about whether you should be baptized. There is no rush and no shame in postponing your baptism if you feel you are not yet ready.

The five sessions are as follows:

- 1) What is the Gospel?
- 2) What is Baptism?
- 3) Am I Ready for Baptism?
- 4) How Can I Grow in Christ?
- 5) How Can I Be Clean?

What is the Gospel? project

Before meeting with your mentor, use the space below to write out your understanding of the Gospel. What would someone need to believe about God in order to be saved? Try to be as clear as you can. Please try to do this without using any reference material other than the Bible.

What is the Gospel? commentary

It is important to understand the context of Peter's message in Acts. You may want to take time to read the context – Acts 10:1–11:18. Up to this time in Acts, the gospel had only gone out to the Jewish people in Jerusalem and eventually to the surrounding areas. About 40,000 had become Christians in Jerusalem, but there were still no Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. This whole narrative about Cornelius, which began in Acts 10:1, is about the gospel going to the Gentiles for the first time.

So what did Peter tell him? The essential facts Cornelius needed to know about Jesus Christ:

- ◆ God shows no favoritism – the gospel is for all.
- ◆ Jesus was sent to Israel by God in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.
- ◆ The Gospel is the good news that we can have peace with God.
- ◆ Jesus is Lord over all.
- ◆ Jesus went about doing good and defeating evil by the power of the Holy Spirit – the same Spirit now at work in believers.
- ◆ Jesus was put to death, but God raised Him up again
- ◆ The apostles saw Jesus after He was raised and He commanded them to preach this message all over the world.
- ◆ Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead – everyone who believes (trusts) in Him will have their sins forgiven.

The Gentiles in Cornelius' house believed, received the Spirit of God, and were baptized. The Spirit was given to those who believed and came to live in them, as Jesus had promised in John 13–17. After seeing evidence that the members of Cornelius' household truly believed and had received the Holy Spirit, Peter insisted that they be baptized.

What is clear from this passage? The message is clear – Jesus is the judge of all life, and He will forgive the sins of all who believe in Him. Once we believe, we receive the Spirit of God. Then we need to be baptized, which is the sign of identifying with Christ and his new believing community – the Church.

Signature of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

What is Baptism? project

Before meeting with your mentor, use the space below to write out your understanding of what baptism is? Why does a Christian need to be baptized? What does Baptism signify?

What is Baptism? commentary

The grammatical structure of this commission is very important. The specific command is to “make disciples.” The other three parts that support the command are participles – going, baptizing, and teaching. Therefore, there were three things that the disciples needed to do to make disciples of Jesus Christ. First, they were to go to the nations. They had to take the gospel message to them. Second, they needed to baptize those who had believed. And third, they needed to teach the new converts all that Jesus had taught them.

The practice of becoming a disciple of Jesus, as commanded by Jesus, included believing, being baptized, and then being taught. Baptism then, is the second of three steps. What exactly is baptism?

- 1) Baptism is a symbol: The word in the Greek literally means “to immerse, to dip.” Baptism was a practice of immersing the individual in water, powerfully symbolizing death, burial and resurrection. Baptism is an picture of what happens within the believer when he comes to faith: his old way of life has died with Christ, yet Christ raised him again to a new life in Him.
- 2) Baptism is a ceremony: Baptism is a public initiation rite. Baptism is essential because it reinforces the decision to trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ and to publicly identify with His people. When the new convert comes back up out of the water he is part of a new family – the Church.
- 3) Baptism is a start: Baptism marks the start of the life of a disciple and therefore is to be conducted as soon as possible after a person comes to genuine faith in Christ. Note the order in the passage – full instruction in the Christian faith comes after a person is baptized.
- 4) Baptism itself does not save: As the gospel teaches, people are saved as they come to believe in Jesus Christ and receive the Holy Spirit. Baptism is merely the means of publicly testifying of one’s response to the gospel.

To become a disciple of Jesus Christ means first to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ – the gospel; to be publicly baptized – identifying with Jesus and His message and joining the community of faith; and finally, to receive the teachings which Jesus taught the disciples.

Signature of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Am I Ready For Baptism? discussion

As we saw in the very first lesson, Peter insisted that Cornelius and the members of his household were ready for baptism when he recognized that the Holy Spirit had come upon them. What is the connection between baptism and the Holy Spirit? Who is the Holy Spirit and how do we know that we have received Him?

Read Romans 8:9–17 and discuss the following with your mentor.

- 1) Can a person have new life in Christ apart from the Holy Spirit? Is receiving the Holy Spirit something that happens some time after one receives new life in Christ or when one comes to faith (see also Ephesians 1:13)?
- 2) How is baptism a symbolic picture of what the Holy Spirit has already done in the life of a believer?
- 3) What sort of internal and external fruit does the Spirit produce in our lives that bears evidence that our faith is genuine and that we have truly been raised to new life (see also Galatians 5:16–26)?

Am I Ready For Baptism? commentary

While we are given no explicit instruction in the New Testament of when a person is to receive baptism, the practice of the early church in the Book of Acts suggests that a person was baptized as soon as possible after it was discerned that they had genuinely come to faith in Christ. They looked for evidence that the Holy Spirit had truly come to indwell the individual and was beginning the process of transforming them from the inside out.

The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit comes to reside within us at the moment we come to faith. In that moment, the Spirit unites us with Christ in his death and resurrection so that we begin our new life as God's child. This inner work is what is symbolized in water baptism.

What sort of evidence does the Spirit produce in us so that we might be confident that we are ready to be baptized? The New Testament speaks of many different evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence in us:

- 1) Faith: The first evidence of the Spirit is our confession of faith in Jesus Christ. By the Spirit we call upon God as our Father and receive confirmation that we are indeed his children.
- 2) Fruit: Galatians 5:22–23 speaks of the fruit that the Spirit bears in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. The Spirit transforms us from within to become more Christ-like.
- 3) Filling: In the Book of Acts, to be filled with the Spirit is to be empowered and energized to boldly proclaim the gospel and point others to Jesus. A desire to share your faith with others is evidence of the Spirit's presence within you.
- 4) Phenomenon: Like the members of Cornelius' household, some people testify to experiencing unique spiritual phenomena as a result of the Spirit's work in their life.

While any of these evidences can be counterfeited, taken together a believer can be reasonably confident that their faith is genuine and that they are ready to be baptized.

Signature of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Am I Ready For Baptism? project

Please write out your story of how you came to know Christ and what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life since coming to know Jesus. You may be asked to share this at your baptism.

How Can I Grow in Christ? discussion

As we saw in a previous lesson, the final aspect of Jesus' commission is to teach disciples to obey all that Jesus commanded. This implies that there is a core set of Jesus' teachings which had been delivered to the apostles that every believer needs to learn. The core elements of this teaching are referred in the New Testament as the "first principles of Christ."

Read Colossians 2:6–8 and discuss the following with your mentor.

- 1) What stages of the Christian life are referred to in verses 6–7?
Where would you place yourself along this progression?

- 2) Notice the conflict in this passage between the elemental philosophies (first principles) of the world and those of Christ. How would one be able to discern the difference between the philosophies of the world and that of Christ? How does this relate to the above stages of Christian maturity?

- 3) What does it mean to be established in the faith?

- 4) What kind of commitment do you think it would take to master the first principles of Christianity and become established in your faith?
How long do you think this would take?

How Can I Grow in Christ? commentary

Baptism marks the start of the Christian life of discipleship, after one receives Christ Jesus as Lord. In Colossians 2:6–8 we see that the goal of our faith is not merely to receive Christ and be baptized but to be fully established in the faith so that every area of our life is rooted in the teachings of Christ. Thus, baptism begins the process of our being rooted and built up in Christ through the teachings of the Gospel. Our “faith in Christ” is not just for our salvation, but it is to permeate every area of our lives.

To get this idea across, Paul uses the concept of philosophy. The world has a philosophy and Christ has a philosophy. Once we buy into a philosophy, it captures us. We then build our whole foundation on that philosophy – whether we are conscious of it or not. The world's philosophy has a set of elementary principles, and Christ has a set of elementary principles. As we humbly study the scriptures seeking to obey the teachings of Christ, the Holy Spirit will reveal to us how much of our previous way of thinking was influenced by the world's systems.

As you read scripture, particularly the New Testament, you will find that it contains a new way of approaching life. The Gospel redefines personal values, virtues and ways of relating to others. How we think of singleness, marriage, parenting, work, financial issues, community service, and other arenas of life is transformed by the teachings of Christ. This instruction is not presented as a distant ideal, but as something that ordinary people could live out with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

It is expected of every new believer that they will become fully established in their faith. This process does not happen overnight, yet with an open heart toward the Word of God, prayerful conversation with the Holy Spirit, and proper mentoring within the body of Christ one should progress in the faith and grow in confidence in their faith and obedience the Gospel.

Signature of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

How Can I Grow in Christ? project

As you begin your life of discipleship, it is helpful to carefully think through how you can become more rooted in your faith. In the space below, write out some personal spiritual goals that you would like to pursue over the next few months and years to grow deeper in your faith. These goals can cover personal Bible reading plans, small group or church involvement, ministry opportunities you'd like to participate in, or ways that you hope to integrate your faith into your daily life. These goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, and time-bound. An example of a good goal would be:

Over the next three months, I'd like to share the gospel with three of my close friends.

Try to write at least 5 good goals. Talk with your mentor regarding discipleship and mentoring opportunities available to you.

How Can I Be Clean? commentary

This passage holds the secret to living a victorious spiritual life in fellowship with Christ free from guilt and condemnation. The big idea of this passage is that Christ calls us to purity, not perfection. The goal of our faith is to walk with Christ in purity and freedom. Yet as we live in this world none of us will ever attain perfection, and thus we will never get to the point at which we can say that we have no sin at all. So how do we deal with our sin while yet maintaining a walk with Christ?

The answer is that we continually confess our sins to God, for he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from them. To confess our sins means that we agree with God that what we have done is wrong in His eyes. Confession is part of a greater act of repentance – turning away from our sin to God our savior. We can confess our sins directly to God, for it is against Him that we have sinned, yet sometimes it is helpful to confess our sins to another Christian, as God has given the ministry of reconciliation to the body of Christ.

When we sin we often become reluctant to turn to God because we fear punishment for our sins. Other times we try to punish ourselves for them, beating ourselves up spiritually until we feel we've paid for it. Yet neither of these approaches can cleanse us of our sin.

Our sin needs no more to be punished for God has already punished all of our sins in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. God acts justly to forgive us our sins for they have already been punished in Christ. Therefore, when we come to God in sincere confession, He can immediately forgive us and cleanse us of our sin and restore us to the joy of walking with Christ in purity.

While this walk of confession and forgiveness will mark your entire Christian life, as you approach your baptism it is a great opportunity to begin your walk of faith forgiven and cleansed.

Signature of Mentor: _____ Date: _____

How Can I Be Clean? project

Work through the following with a pastor or mentor trained in Spiritual Mentoring. In each of the following areas, ask the Holy Spirit to identify any sin that He would have you to confess and receive forgiveness and cleansing from. Before beginning pray a prayer of this sort:

Father God, nothing is hidden from your sight. Your Spirit searches all things and your Word cuts to the heart like a sword. Search me, O God, and know my heart. See if there is any offensive way in me. Show me my sin so I may confess it, repent, and come to you for cleansing. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

1. Non-Christian Religions:

And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. (Acts 19:19)

2. Sexual Immorality and Improper Relationships

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:18–20)

3. General Immorality:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: ... enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19–21)

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (Romans 1:29–31)

4. Forgiveness Issues:

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:26–32)

Part A – Someone Offended You

Person	Offense/Event	Feeling

Part B – You Offended Someone

Person	Offense/Event	Feeling

5. Renouncing Lies and Curses

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3–5)

Prayer of Confession

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been involved with (name sin) as my sin. I now see that my involvement with (name sin) was purely evil. I renounce it as evil, repent of it (turn from it) and ask you to forgive me and cleanse me of my unrighteousness. In Jesus' name, Amen.