



BAPTISM MANUAL



“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

– Matthew 28:19-20

This manual belongs to

Dear Friend,

We are very pleased that God has brought you to the place of considering to be baptized. Baptism is a profound event in the life of the follower of Jesus. The specific form of baptism that you are considering was unique to the early Church and remains an essential act of obedience to Jesus’ teachings.

This manual has been designed with four chapters. One chapter is to be completed each week. We’ve also provided you with daily devotionals that focus on what the Bible says about baptism. Each day you can interact with a passage or passages that are significant in this journey of baptism for you.

Pursuing a deeper understanding of God and a greater closeness to Him is a journey you will continue your whole life. Prior to baptism, it’s so important that you have a good understanding of specific, core Christian beliefs. We are confident that, considering what’s already happening in your life, and the study you are about to begin, you will have the grounding that enables you to be ready for baptism.

If you don’t already have a Study Bible, you might consider picking one up that has tools that will help you gain a true understanding of what the text is saying. Things like footnotes and cross-references are very valuable.

I am excited about this journey we will be taking together.

Pastor Mike

Table of Contents

DEVOTIONS: Baptism in the Gospels	4
WEEK ONE: Who is Jesus?	6
DEVOTIONS: Baptism in Acts	10
WEEK TWO: What is the Gospel?	12
DEVOTIONS: Baptism in the Early Church, Pt 1	17
WEEK THREE: Why the Cross	20
DEVOTIONS: Baptism in the Early Church, Pt 2	26
WEEK FOUR: What is a Christian?	28
How to Prepare a Personal Testimony	32

Week One – Baptism in the Gospels

1. **THE BAPTISM OF JOHN** – Read Mark 1:1- 8

John, who was the advance messenger before Jesus, wasn't the first to baptize. It was an old custom to immerse Gentiles in water when they turned from a heathen belief to the Jewish religion. This was called "Proselyte Baptism" and was an act of cleansing. But here John the Baptist made the new and startling demand that not only Gentiles, but Jews should be baptized, and not for cleansing, but as an act of repentance and faith. Why are you considering baptism?

2. **THE BAPTISM OF JESUS** – Read Mark 1:9 – 13

Jesus was 30 years old and working as a carpenter in Nazareth when he heard the news of the revival under John the Baptist. Jesus then knew that it was time for Him to begin His Ministry, so He left Nazareth for Jordan and was baptized by John in the river. It was then that His father filled Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and a Voice from Heaven reassured Jesus of His work. Why do you believe Jesus was baptized? What implications does this have?

3. **FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS** – Read Matthew 3:13 – 17

Matthew tells us that John was doubtful about baptizing Jesus. Why should the sinless One need a baptism of repentance and forgiveness? How does that affect us?

4. **BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT** – Read Luke 3:21 – 22, John 1:32 -34

Jesus was not only baptized with water, but also with the Holy Spirit. We will see later how important this is in the New Testament. God gave the Holy Spirit to Jesus at His baptism so that Jesus then had the power to do the special work God had for him. God always gives the Holy Spirit to Christians to do the special work He has entrusted to each of us too. What is your "special work" for God?

5. **BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH** – Read John 3:1 -8

Nicodemus comes to Jesus in secret to ask Him real faith questions. Jesus talks with him about how important it is to be baptized both with water and with the Holy Spirit. The good news is that Jesus has the power to save us because of His death and resurrection. But WE must do the repenting and WE must walk out this faith in Him, and not just in secret like Nicodemus was doing here. Baptism shows this image of our repentance and faith in a very public way. Why are we baptized in public?

6. **JESUS BAPTIZING DISCIPLES** – Read John 3:22 -24, John 4:1 -3

The work of Jesus and John the Baptist went on together for a time, but Jesus didn't want to be thought of as a rival of John, so He left Jordan, and went to His home in Galilee to preach. Here we see that Jesus made sure His followers were baptized. Why do you think it is still important for followers of Jesus to be baptized?

7. **THE COMMAND TO BAPTIZE** – Read Matthew 28:16 -20, Mark 16:15 -16

After His Resurrection, and just before He ascended to Heaven, Jesus gave a great command to His Church, which also includes us! 1. To make disciples, 2. To baptize them, 3. To teach them. These commands have an important order; we must be disciples before we are ready to be taught. You're looking at the step of obedience of being baptized. For now, and into your future how **are** you being taught and how **will** you be taught?

Questions or things you want to discuss?

Week One: Who is Jesus?

Christianity has been labelled many things; however, there can be no denying that it all centers on the Person of Jesus Christ. It wasn't even so much on what he taught, but on WHO He is. Because of whom He is, the early Christians saw value and meaning in what He taught. It was relevant to them. They believed the staggering truth that Jesus Christ, while he was truly man, is also truly God.

This belief is central to Christianity. But is it true? Many people have said that it is the result of well-meaning but misguided respect for a remarkable man. So, in this week's lesson we are going back to the source.

Before you start this lesson, I invite you not to be content to just fill in the blanks. Spend some time praying, asking the Lord to speak to you through His Word.

JESUS' HUMANITY

1. *Take a look at these verses and write down how Jesus' humanness is shown.*

John 4:6 – 7 _____

John 11:33 – 36 _____

John 19:28 – 34 _____

2. *The letter to the Hebrews focuses on the fact that Jesus was a human being, and how important that is for us. What do these verses teach about the importance of Jesus' humanity?*

Hebrews 2:14 – 18 _____

Hebrews 4:14 – 16 _____

Hebrews 5:7 – 8 _____

“Christ became what we are that He might make us what He is.” – Athanasius

SO WHAT? Why is it important to my salvation that Jesus was a man? How can this encourage me in my everyday life?

JESUS CONFIDENCE AND CLAIMS

3. *What do these verses tell us about what Jesus' view of Himself was?*

John 5:16 – 23 _____

John 6:27 – 29 _____

John 17:1 – 5, 24 – 26 _____

4. *What does Jesus claim about Himself in these passages?*

John 10:30 – 39 _____

John 14:9 – 11 _____

In Jesus’ teachings and from others in the New Testament there are direct claims that Jesus is equal to God – that He is God. There are also many indirect or implied claims too, times where what Jesus said didn’t say the exact words “I am God”, but he implied that truth by what he did say. The people who were watching and listening to Jesus knew exactly what Jesus indirect claims were saying. That’s what ticked them off so much!

5. *Compare these Old Testament and New Testament verses. In what ways can Jesus’ words be taken as implied claims of His equality with God?*

Psalm 75:7 and John 5:22 – 23 _____

Psalm 27:1 and John 8:12 _____

Exodus 3:13 – 15 and John 8:58 _____

Psalm 23:1 and John 10:11 _____

6. *Look at what the Apostles said and did in Acts 10:25 – 26 and Acts 14:8 – 18 when people tried to worship them. Then look at Jesus response to being worshipped in John 1:49 – 51 and John 20:28 – 29. What can we learn from the difference?*

“You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – CS Lewis

SO WHAT? How have these passages strengthened your conviction that Jesus considers Himself to be God in human form? Which passages would I turn to, to show His confidence and claims about Who He is?

JESUS’ TEACHING AND LIFESTYLE

7. *Jesus’ teaching about life can’t be separated from His teaching about God. Because He is God, everything he said and taught about life really matters for us. The way He lived His life also gives us more evidence of Who He is. What happened to these people that heard Jesus?*

Mark 1:21 – 22 _____

John 7:14 – 16 _____

John 7:45 – 47 _____

8. *Based on what these witnesses said, how did Jesus behavior match with his teachings?*

John (John 1:14) _____

Peter (1 Peter 2:22) _____

Jesus Himself (John 8:29) _____

God the Father (Matthew 3:17) _____

SO WHAT? If Jesus' claims about Himself were false, either He knew it and deliberately lied, or He was really deluded. After looking at His teaching and lifestyle, what truths could you use to prove wrong the claim that He was either a liar or a lunatic?

9. *What difference would it make to Christianity if Jesus was just a man and not also God?*

JESUS' MIRACLES

The Bible doesn't say we should have faith just because Jesus did miraculous signs. But the miracles do add credibility to Jesus' claims. You can't just dismiss them – look at these eyewitness accounts from John. He recorded seven great signs that Jesus miraculously did.

- Turning water into wine (John 2:1 – 11)
- Healing the official's son (4:46 – 54)
- Healing the invalid at the pool (5:1 – 9)
- Feeding the five thousand (6:1 – 13)
- Walking on Water (6:16 – 21)
- Healing the blind man from birth (9:1 – 7)
- Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1 – 11)

Choose one of these passages and write down your impressions. What does the miracle show about Jesus?

10. *What was the response to Jesus' signs?*

John 2:11 _____

John 11:45 – 48 _____

JESUS RESURRECTION

We'll be spending a whole lesson on what the Cross means to our faith in a future lesson, but let's jump ahead in Jesus' life right now to look at what came after the Cross, the Resurrection. It's foundational to our faith that we follow a living God, a risen Saviour.

11. Jesus points ahead to His resurrection and said there would be a specific sign for those who wouldn't believe in Him. *What was it?* John 2:18 – 22 and Matthew 12:38 – 40.

12. Read the account of the Resurrection of Jesus in John chapter 20. What parts of the story most impress you that the account is reliable, and the resurrection of Jesus is a fact? See the other gospel accounts in Matthew 27:62 – 28:15, Mark 16 and Luke 24. *What strikes you about them?*

Here are some of the items of evidence that support the main truth that Jesus was crucified, but now is risen!

Genuine death • definite burial • huge stone • seal • military guard • missing body • undisturbed grave clothes • appears to others now alive • transformed disciples • unconvincing alternative explanations

SO WHAT? *What evidence speaks most clearly to me that Jesus rose from the dead?*

How does Jesus' resurrection show the truth of what He said He'd do and Who He said He was?

Look over this week's study and write down some of the significant things you've learned about Jesus. When we get together this week, let's talk about any adjustments that need to be made in our attitudes or behavior. Take time to pray and ask God to show you what your response should be to the truths you've learned.

What is the most significant truth? _____

What do I need to do about that? _____

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." – John 14:6

Week Two – Baptism in The Acts of the Apostles

1. **WHAT SHALL WE DO?** Read Acts 2:37 – 42

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about Jesus with such power that the Bible says the crowds were “cut to the heart” and cried, “What shall we do?” Peter tells them about several things in his reply and they do them! Next, we read what these new believers did as a community after being baptized. Write down the four things that verse 42 teaches us to do as believers. What does each of them mean to you?

2. **CONVERSION, BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT** – Read Acts 8:12 – 17

The Bible is always consistent, Baptism NEVER comes before believing in Jesus. And in Scripture Conversion (turning and believing in Jesus as Saviour), the gift of the Holy Spirit and Baptism all go together, often as one act. Why do you think some people wait so long to be baptized? Is there anything that has kept you from it?

3. **THE BAPTISM OF THE ETHIOPIAN** – Read Acts 8:35 – 39

The Ethiopian became a Christian by reading the Bible and hearing Philip’s testimony. This is often the way God works. Look how ready he is to be baptized – he doesn’t say “Why should I be baptized”, but instead, “What is there to prevent me?” Philip had a huge influence on this man deciding to follow Jesus. Who is someone who has greatly influenced your faith? How?

4. **THE BAPTISM OF PAUL** – Read Acts 9:17 – 19 and Acts 22:2 – 16

A wonderful conversion or testimony doesn’t mean baptism is unnecessary. Paul was converted and baptized for a purpose - to be a witness to all men (Acts 22:15). We are also saved to serve. Baptism isn’t the end, but the beginning of a lifetime of service and witness. In what ways do you intend to serve Jesus and live as a witness for Him?

5. **THE BAPTISM OF CORNELIUS** – Read Acts 10:44 – 48

Cornelius was the first Gentile (non-Jew) to become a Christian, to receive the Holy Spirit and to be baptized. Many people around Cornelius were amazed that God would be working in a Gentile’s life. How has what God has been doing in your life been influencing other people? How would you hope your baptism is used by God?

6. **THE BAPTISM OF LYDIA** – Read Acts 16:11 – 15

Lydia and her whole household were baptized. This doesn’t mean that anyone was baptized without personal faith, but all were baptized because they ALL believed! She and her household were the first people in Europe to “believe and be baptized”. What are some of the different areas of your life and how would you explain your faith to the people in those areas?

7. **THE BAPTISM OF THE PHILLIPIAN JAILER** – Read Acts 16:25 – 34

What a story! The earthquake made the jailer afraid of what was next for him and that made him ready to hear the Gospel. The apostles told him quite simply about Jesus. When he heard the message, he believed and put his trust in Jesus so that he would be saved, then he was baptized at once – again we see that believing in Jesus as Saviour and being baptized are followed closely together. Next his family was baptized too, but only after they heard the Word of the Lord (verse 32). What is the result? They rejoice! (Verse 34). How do you rejoice in your faith?

Questions or things you want to discuss?

Week Two: What is the Gospel?

The word gospel means ‘good news’. The news is so good that the New Testament is full of the stories of men and women bursting with a desire to pass on the news to others. Jesus began His own ministry by making known the good news of God. He said “The time has come! The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Matthew 4:17).

But what is the good news? The New Testament shows us a great variety of ways the early Christians communicated the gospel or good news, but some truths are central in each place.

The book of Acts describes the beginning of the Christian Church. It describes how Jesus’ early followers, led by the Holy Spirit spread the Christian faith. This week we will look at their preaching and try to identify the central truths of what the gospel is.

Spend some time again asking God to speak to you through these passages.

1. These verses summarize the message the early Christians preached. Read them and write down what they were preaching.

Acts 8:35 _____

Acts 11:20 _____

Acts 28:31 _____

So, have you got it? Let’s spend some more time in Acts and find out what the gospels preached about Jesus. List the basic facts communicated about Jesus in each passage.

***NOTE:** Messiah was a Hebrew title meaning ‘the anointed one.’ It was given to the Saviour-King who was promised in the Old Testament prophets. The Greek word translated ‘the Christ’ has the same meaning.

<u>VERSES</u>	<u>MAIN FACTS ABOUT JESUS</u>
Acts 2:22 – 36	_____ _____
Acts 3:12 – 18	_____ _____
Acts 4:8 – 12	_____ _____
Acts 10:36 – 43	_____ _____
Acts 13:26 – 41	_____ _____

Give a summary from what you just went through about Jesus:

Ask yourself: How could I explain this statement: "The Gospel is Jesus?" Look over your summary about Jesus, are there truths about Him that could influence your thinking more or influence how you talk to others about Jesus?

"We must say that the good things the apostles announce in this gospel are simple Jesus." – Origin

2. Read Acts 14:3. It describes the Gospel as "the message of His grace." That's said again in Acts 20:24. What do you think that means?

3. How do the early preachers describe what God offers to those who believe and follow Him?

Acts 2:38 _____

Acts 3:19 _____

Acts 13:38 – 39 _____

Acts 15:8 – 9 _____

4. How does this offer fulfill God's promises to His people in the Old Testament passages found here?

Jeremiah 31:31 – 34 _____

Ezekiel 36:25 – 27 _____

5. Other passages in the Bible also talk about the things God gives us when we respond to the Good News. *What do these passages say God gives us?*

<u>PASSAGE</u>	<u>GOD'S GIFT TO US</u>
John 1:12 – 13	_____
John 5:24	_____
John 6:35	_____
John 7:37 – 39	_____
John 8:12	_____
John 10:10	_____
John 14:27	_____
John 15:5	_____

In what ways are you seeing God's generosity to you through these passages? How does that impact you?

"Most religions tell you something you must do. This religion tells you something God has done through Jesus on the cross" (Michael Green). We can never get away from the truth that our standing before God is not based on what we do. It's based on what God has done through Jesus on the Cross.

6. *What kind of response did the apostles ask for from those who heard their message about Jesus Christ?*

Acts 2:37 – 38 _____

Acts 20:21 _____

Acts 26:19 - 20 _____

The good news is calling us to respond to Him!

So, what about Baptism? In New Testament Times, baptism was the seal or symbol of God’s offer of forgiveness and Holy Spirit. It was man’s response to the offer in repentance and faith. It also showed that you were entering into the Christian community. Our Church baptizes a person that has come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Membership in our Church is a separate experience that can also follow baptism. We believe a follower of Jesus should actively join into advancing what God is doing through the Church.

So, what about Repentance? This is a radical change of mind. It’s your thoughts, attitudes, outlook and direction transforming. It means turning from sin and turning to God. It isn’t just feeling sorry, but it means honestly admitting our guilt and adopting a new attitude. Some people describe it as ‘doing a 180”, turning from what you were doing and going the opposite way toward God.

So, what about Faith? This means abandoning all trust in our own resources. It means throwing yourself completely on the mercy of God. Then it means grabbing hold of the promises that God gives us in Jesus – not like an unthinking leap into the dark, but a commitment to Him based on the evidence of who He is.

7. Read Acts 19:17 – 20. How does this event illustrate what **repentance** is?

8. Romans 4:18 – 25 talks about an event in Abraham’s life that shows what **faith** looks like.

Where could Abraham NOT place his confidence? _____

Where did he put his hope? _____

What immediate effect or result did his faith have? _____

How does this illustrate the meaning of having faith for us?

So What? Looking at the definitions of **faith** and **repentance** above, have I responded to the gospel in repentance and faith? What should I do to make a public confession of my faith?

9. Read these next passages. In what ways did the apostles preach the Good News to those who didn’t believe? Why did it matter so much to them?

Acts 2:40 _____

Acts 17:16 – 17 _____

Acts 26:28 – 29 _____

When the apostles faced opposition for preaching the Good News, how did this affect them?

Acts 4:18 – 20 _____

Acts 5:40 - 42 _____

What effect did this have on others? Read Acts 8:1 – 4

Ask yourself: *What motivated the apostles to be so courageous preaching the Good News? What can I learn from their attitude?*

What is the most important thing you've learned in this lesson?

What are you going to do about it?

Week Three – Baptism in the Early Church, Part 1

1. HEARD, BELIEVED, BAPTIZED - Read Acts 18:8 – 11

We have seen in earlier readings how hearing the Gospel is followed by belief, and belief is followed by baptism. This passage is another example of that order. Baptism is for those who have heard and believed the Gospel. In this passage the Lord Jesus encourages Paul to continue making known the Gospel message, assuring him of His Own Presence and help.

What are the ways you rely upon God's help?

2. THE BAPTISM OF THE EPHESIAN DISCIPLES – Read Acts 19: 1 – 7

Acts links Christian baptism with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, so when Paul finds some baptized disciples in Ephesus who had not received the Holy Spirit, he naturally asks them what kind of baptism they had. They tell him they were baptized as disciples of John the Baptist, so Paul explains that John's work was to point people to the coming Saviour that they might trust in Him. They were then baptized as Christians and received the Holy Spirit.

Based on what you've learned so far – what is your understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism? (See also John 15:26 – John 16:15).

3. FAITH, BAPTISM AND FELLOWSHIP – Read Galatians 3:23 – 29

Jesus is the only Son of God, but by our faith in Jesus which we outwardly express in baptism, we have become sons of God too! How do you feel about being a "son" of the Creator of the Universe? In baptism we show that we have "put on" Christ, just like being clothed. We are brought into a new fellowship or community: the children of God. Here there are no divisions, and through Christ, we inherit all the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament.

If we're part of a community where God sees no differences or divisions is there anyone you have a barrier with? How can you make this right?

4. BAPTISM AND THE OWNERSHIP OF JESUS – Read 1 Corinthians 1:12 – 17, 6:11

Baptism means ownership, so those who have been baptized in the name of Christ BELONG TO CHRIST. IN this passage Paul reminds them It’s wrong to say they follow or belong to anyone else. We belong to Christ alone. We are washed from sin, sanctified (or made holy, set apart to God), and justified (acquitted of wrong, declared by God to be righteous) in the name of Jesus – we’re declared “not guilty”.

Take a look at what your life is involved in. Do you belong to someone or something other than Christ?

5. BEWARE – Read 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 5

The Old Testament Hebrews had a “kind” of baptism (verse 2) and a “kind” of Communion service (verse 3 – 4), but God was not pleased with them and punished them. Baptism isn’t a substitute for living a holy life, but we are baptized INTO a holy life. We must determine that we will live a holy life for the rest of our days. We can’t say, “because I’ve been baptized, I will be alright”. God still calls us to follow and obey.

Are there areas in your life you still need to be cleansed from?

6. UNION WITH ONE ANOTHER – Read 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 14

We can’t be like someone on a deserted island, tucked away all on our own. To be baptized into Christ is to be baptized into His “body” – the Church. Just like physical bodies have parts that each have a unique function, the spiritual body of the Church has individual people who also have roles to play. We belong to each other, and we need each of us to be the Body of Christ.

What is your ministry in the Church? What are your gifts?

7. UNION WITH CHRIST – Read Romans 6:1 – 4

Baptism is a re-enactment of Jesus death, burial and resurrection, and at the same time it’s a picture of our own too. We show that we are now “dead” to our old life, our sins are “buried”, and we have “risen” to a new life in Christ.

In what ways does your life give testimony to this?

Questions or things you want to discuss?

Week Three – Why the Cross?

This week’s study is going to focus on the question “what does the Cross have to do with Christianity?”.

The Gospels devote a lot of attention to the events surrounding the death of Christ. We need to pay attention to that. Clearly, the writers saw that Jesus’ death on the Cross and His resurrection was central to the Good News they wanted to proclaim. It wasn’t just a sad end to the story of an amazing life, they saw the Cross as the focus, the high point and completing act of the life of Jesus Christ.

Don’t go speeding in expecting God to teach you. Take some significant time and allow Him to make you open to what He wants to teach you.

Christ and the Cross

This week we’re going to be spending time in the gospel of Mark. Mark had a wonderful way of expressing himself. Everything is fast and full of action. That’s why it’s the shortest Gospel. If you read it all in one sitting, you’d see that it leaves a vivid impression of God’s Son. How Jesus fulfills His purpose becomes really clear; He came into the world to die. In this lesson we’ll be focusing on that purpose.

1. *This Gospel hinges on one verse. Everything before it is building toward it, and everything after it is because of what it asks. Read it in Mark 8:29. How would you answer that question?*

2. *Jesus now begins to explain what His mission is to His disciples. What can you learn about this mission from these verses?*

Mark 8:31 – 33 _____

Mark 9:30 – 32 _____

Mark 10:32 – 34 _____

3. *Jesus compares the purpose of His death to what?*

Mark 10:45 _____

Mark 14:22 – 24 _____

RANSOM: In the Old Testament, the word ransom meant the price paid for the release of slaves or prisoners of war. It is also the fine paid by someone who had accidentally caused the death of someone else, it was a fine that prevented the death penalty.

COVENANT: This is a promise God establishes (creates or begins) by His own gracious initiative. It’s a new deal offered to man. It’s not like a compromise or negotiation between God and man like we are equals. It’s a promise set up by a holy God toward us. It’s God-initiated bond or guarantee.

4. *What was Christ's attitude toward His death?*

Mark 14:32 – 36 _____

Mark 15:33 – 34 _____

Throughout His life, Jesus was such a courageous person. Yet, He faced His death with a dread or foreboding. More so than many others who were much less courageous than Him. Martin Luther observed "Never man feared death like this man." On the cross Jesus seemed to experience a terrible sense of God turning away or abandoning Him. Why was this so? The answer is in what Christ's death meant. It was no ordinary death – it was a sin-bearing death for all of us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us." We're going to investigate what that means.

So What? What can you learn from Christ's attitude toward death?

The Meaning of the Cross: Justification - The Law Courts

One of the most common New Testament words for explaining the meaning of the Cross is **justification**. Acts 13:38 – 39 shows the Apostle Paul preaching in the synagogue in Antioch saying "Therefore my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses".

The picture he's trying to create is a court of law. Paul often uses this picture especially in the book of Romans.

5. In Romans 1: 18 – 3:20 it's like Paul is bringing the main segments of society into court before a righteous God. Pagans without morals, moral Gentiles, and the Jews. Read this section of Scripture and pay attention to Paul's charges against them.

What is the conclusion about all people that Paul comes to in Romans 3:9 – 20?

Compare that to Romans 3:23

6. Because God is completely righteous, He cannot overlook sin, even though all of mankind is guilty. Romans 3:21 – 26 tells us that Christ is the only answer to our unsolvable sin problem. Read this passage **several** times and the definitions that follow, then answer the questions. It might be helpful to also use another translation of Scripture to further help you understand this passage.

RIGHTEOUSNESS (from God): In this context it's a legal term meaning a status of being right with God.

THE LAW & THE PROFITS: The Old Testament.

JUSTIFIED: This is a legal term meaning “acquitted” or “declared righteous,” the opposite of “condemned.” Justifying is the judge’s act. To be justified means “to get the verdict.”

REDEMPTION: This basically means the same thing as ransom.

ATONEMENT: This Old English word literally means “making at one”. The word atone comes from the words at and one. It points us to the process of uniting or bringing together those who are estranged, divided or apart.

a. *How do we become righteous before God?*

b. *Why do we need this rather than the old way of keeping the Law?*

c. *How does Paul describe this new righteousness?*

d. *What's the only way for a just God to acquit sinful people?*

JUSTIFICATION: God’s act of paying the sins of guilty men and counting them righteous freely, by His grace, through faith in Christ, on the ground, not of their own works, but of the ‘representative law-keeping and redemptive blood-shedding’ of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf. Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

7. *Look at these verses, what does this justification mean for us?*

Romans 3:27 – 28 _____

Romans 5: 1 – 2 _____

Romans 8:31 – 39 _____

So What? The Bible says, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) If you were to die tonight and stand before God for judgment, what would be your defense?

If justification is a gift from God that you have received by faith, how should this gift affect your attitude toward life? _____

The word JUSTIFICATION explains how important the Cross is in legal terms. It looks at how a law breaker can avoid the guilty sentence of God, the righteous Judge. The amazing truth is that through Christ's death on the Cross, the guilty person can now be acquitted – declared innocent. We are free from condemnation and in a new, right relationship with God!

The Meaning of the Cross: Cleansing - The Tabernacle

The second picture of the meaning of the Cross is painted in religious terms. The question it looks at is, "how can an unworthy and unclean worshipper approach a pure and holy God?" How can we be **cleansed**? In the Old Testament we see there was an elaborate system of animal sacrifice, carried out by specially ordained priests, and done in a tabernacle built for this purpose. The first tabernacle was a portable tent, later a permanent Temple was built. The whole system was set up by God and pointed forward to the work of Christ. Hebrews explains this picture and meaning of the Cross.

8. *First let's start with the Old Testament. Detailed instructions for Old Testament sacrifices are found in Leviticus. Read Chapter 16 which describes the Day of Atonement. Don't worry about the parts you don't understand but make note of the things that strike you. If you have a drawing of the tabernacle in the notes of your Bible, it might be helpful to you.*

9. *Hebrews 5:1 – 10 and 7:23 – 28 compare the Old Testament priests with Christ. What do you learn about Christ through that comparison?*

*The Old Testament priests performed animal sacrifices. The New Testament presents Christ's death on the Cross as a sacrifice of **Himself** instead. Look at Hebrews 9:6 – 15, 9:24 – 28. What does it tell us about the quality of Christ's sacrifice?*

10. *Look at Hebrews 4:14 – 16 and 10:19 – 23. What does the cleansing work of Christ mean for us?*

A dramatic symbol of what Christ has done for us on the Cross – and how that relates to the Tabernacle is recorded in the Gospels. At the moment of His death, the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom (See Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45).

What does this mean for us? _____

So What? Is there anything I can do that will make me more acceptable in God’s presence?

How should what I’ve learned here effect the way I approach God in prayer and worship?

To understand and appreciate what the Cross means, we need to understand the awfulness of sin. Sin, at its most basic, is rebellion against God. We are refusing to allow our Creator to be our God; instead, we decide to be independent. This independence can come out in many ways in our lives.

11. In Psalm 51 King David confesses his sin to God. This psalm talks a lot about what sin looks like, the great hold it has on us and how that affects us. Read this passage and use that as a guide to describe what sin is. Look up the definition of sin, iniquity, and transgression,

What’s the difference between them? Why is God so opposed to sin and how does the Cross of Christ meet the need that David talks about.

The Cross in the Old Testament

The Old Testament also points us toward what Christ would do on the Cross. One of these passages is in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.

12. What does the passage tell us about the meaning of the Cross?

13. What did it cost Christ to atone for our sins?

So What? How can this passage make my appreciation greater for what Jesus did for me?

Stop, Think and Pray

The Cross is at the very center of our faith as Christians. This means we should always be growing in our understanding and our appreciation of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. How has this lesson spoken to you? Maybe it was through a better understanding of one of the pictures of the Cross that helps you see how amazing what He did for us really is. Our response needs to be a deep thankfulness and praise to Him!

This also needs to impact our attitude and our life every day. Ask God to show you if there is any way your attitude needs to change because of the truth you've been studying.

How did God speak to you about the Cross?

What impact should this have on your life?

Week Four – Baptism in the Early Church, Part 2

1. BAPTISM AS AN OUTWARD CONFESSION – Read Romans 10:9 – 13

In this passage, Paul teaches that two things are necessary for salvation – inward belief and outward witness. They are both necessary. Jesus also asks for outward witness (Matthew 10:32). Baptism is one way that Christians make this public witness and say “I am not ashamed to own my Lord”. How is your life a witness to Christ?

2. BURIED AND RAISED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM – Read Colossians 2:11 – 15

Christian Baptism took the place of Jewish circumcision. Just as a Jew was circumcised soon after he was born, a Christian should be baptized as soon as he or she is born again and not before. Baptism means that one life has been finished and another has begun. How are you dwelling in the truth that your old sinful nature is dead and now you’re alive in Christ?

3. THE WASHING OF WATER WITH THE WORD – Read Ephesians 5:25 – 27

This passage talks about marriage, but it also shows that just like Christ washes the Church clean by His sacrifice on the Cross, Baptism is a picture of the “washing” of the soul from sin. This passage says that it’s the combination of Baptism together with the Word (God’s Word in the Bible), and a personal confession of faith (your story of what God has done and is doing in you). In what ways is the Word washing you clean? How is the Word of God impacting your life?

4. BAPTISM, CONFESSION AND A NEW BIRTH – Read 1 Timothy 6:11 – 12 and Titus 3:4 - 7

Living the Christian life is not easy. The Devil often attacks right after baptism. Immediately after Jesus was baptized, He went right out into the wilderness, and was tempted by the Devil (see Luke 4:1 – 13). The way that Satan tempted Jesus, is the same as he tempts the rest of us too. These passages challenge us to remember that we have been born again ENTIRELY by the work of the Holy Spirit and we show this new birth by our baptism (“the washing of regeneration”). We need these reminders of our true identity when we are tempted. Are you seeing areas in your life where the Devil is tempting you?

5. OUTWARD CLEANSING AND INWARD CLEANSING – Read Hebrews 10:19 -25

The author of Hebrews is concerned with two main things: Jesus died and rose again, and we have been baptized into His death and resurrection. Just like our bodies are washed when we're raised in the water of baptism, our souls have also been washed by the blood of Jesus. So, what do these verses say about how we should respond to that? (verses 22 – 24). What does the writer say are some of the expectations of baptized Christians?

6. SAVED THROUGH WATER – Read 1 Peter 3:18 – 22

When Noah was in the ark in the flood he was "saved through water". We are also saved through the waters of baptism, not by the act of being baptized, that just washes the dirt from our bodies, but we're saved by having faith in the power of God. How has the Power that raised Jesus from physical death affected or changed your life?

7. THE THREE WITNESSES – Read 1 John 5: 4 - 8

In this passage John was addressing a controversy where some thought the Cross wasn't as important, that you didn't NEED Christ's death, it could almost be demoted in importance. He shows them that all three witnesses (the Holy Spirit speaking truth, the water baptism and the baptism by blood in his death on the Cross) testify that Jesus is the Son of God, His identity is sure, all three witnesses are in agreement, almost like a court. Why do you think the Cross has to remain central to all we teach and preach? How has the Holy Spirit spoken truth to you?

Questions or things you want to discuss?

Week Four – What is a Christian?

Last week we spent a lot of time looking at why the Cross was so important, and we asked what kind of impact it should have on our lives.

This week we're going to look at what it means to be a Christian. If someone asked you if you were a Christian, what would you say? Why?

The word Christian occurs only three times in the New Testament. Acts 11:26 says it started in Antioch, probably as a nickname given by people who watched the followers of Christ. The other two passages (Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16) tell us that the name soon became widely used by the believers. If the label was intended to be an insult – it didn't work that way. The believers used it because it focused the attention on the Person of Christ.

Today the word Christian doesn't always hold all of the meaning that it had in the New Testament. We're going to try and fill in what the meaning of the word is, looking at other words often used to describe people called Christians.

A Christian is a Child of God

Last week we saw how amazing it is that we can be right with God, the Judge and Holy Creator. We can be declared innocent and cleansed. Even though this truth is great, it doesn't completely convey the depth of the relationship that is possible with God because of Christ. The Bible describes a Christian as a child of God. This relationship is full of affection, closeness and intimacy, rights, and responsibility.

PRIVILEGE: Read Galatians 3:26 - 4:7 and then look at these questions. It's important to know that in the ancient world it was more common to adopt children who were older, not infants.

1. *According to Galatians 3:26 – 27 how do we become children of God? Also take a look John 1:10 – 13.*

2. *What does Galatians 4:4 – 5 teach us about how God made this possible? Compare this with John 14:6*

3. *What privileges are we given when we are adopted as God's children? Compare that with Galatians 3:26 – 4:7 and 1 John 3:1*

Not Just You! Yes, in this lesson we are focusing on you. But the amazing truth is that a Christian being a child of God also means that every other believer is a brother or sister! Galatians 3:28 makes the point.

RESPONSIBILITY: Matthew 5 - 7 is about the Sermon on the Mount. In these chapters Jesus teaches about the responsibilities of Christian living. To understand this teach we have to understand the background that God is our Father.

4. Look at these passages, how should the truth that God is our Father effect our behavior?

Matthew 5:16 _____

Matthew 5:44 – 45 _____

Matthew 6:1 – 6, 16 – 18 _____

5. How should the truth that God is our Father effect the way we pray?

Matthew 6:5 – 15 _____

Matthew 7:7 – 11 _____

6. *How should our responses to the daily pressures of life be different because God is our Father? Read Matthew 6:25 – 34* _____

So What? Ok, you’ve just done a lot of reading. What does it mean to you? Summarize for yourself what it means when you say a Christian is a child of God.

“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as His Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.” – J.I. Packer (*Knowing God*)

Reflect: *How often do you stop and thank God for adopting me into His family? How is the truth that God is my Father influencing my daily life? Give an example*

A Christian is a Believer

Believer is one of the first titles we find in the Book of Acts. See Acts 2:44, 4:32 and 10:45.

7. *Read Romans 3:21 – 28. How does this passage explain why Christians are called believers?*

Compare this with Galatians 3:10 – 14. Why is it so important that we are saved by faith ALONE?

LIVING FAITH: Faith alone gives us salvation, but the New Testament also says that faith means we'll have a type of confidence in God that also means a changed lifestyle.

8. *Hebrews 11 talks about the way faith influenced the lives of men and women of God in the Old Testament. How is faith described in verse 1?*

What amazing statement is made in verse 6?

Read through the list of things people did "by faith" (verses 4 – 12 and 17 – 38). Which ones stand out most to you, why?

9. *Read Hebrews 12:1 – 3. How should the examples of the Old Testament characters talked about in Hebrews 11 encourage us to trust and follow Christ?*

Do you see any examples of the steps of faith these Old Testament characters took that speak to a step of faith you may need to take?

So What? Based on questions 7 – 9, give a summary of what it means that a Christian is a believer.

What are some specific places in your life where you acted in faith?

Where do you need to act in faith now?

A Christian is a Disciple

10. *In the following passages how does Jesus describe the kind of commitment He expects of His disciples?*

Luke 9:23 – 26 _____

Luke 14:25 – 33 (Looking at Matthew 10:37 might help you to understand verse 26)

11. *What encouragement does Jesus give to us in Luke 18:28 – 30?* _____

Daily Obedience

12. *According to these verses, how should we demonstrate our commitment to Jesus?*

Luke 6:46 – 49 _____

Luke 10:38 – 42. (What is the one thing Jesus is referring to?)

See also Luke 8:19 – 21 _____

So What? *Based on questions 10 – 12, summarize what it means that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ?*

Do you understand and accept that to be a Christian means giving Jesus first place in your life, and living the rest of your life as His disciple? _____

In what ways is Jesus calling you to obey His Word today? _____

So, now you've done some reading and reflecting, now it's time for you to respond.

Look over your summary statements about a Christian being a Child of God, a Believer and a Disciple.

What's the main truth you have learned or relearned? _____

What response is God asking you to make? _____

What practical action should you take? _____

“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name,
He gave the right to become children of God.” – John 1:12

This week is our last planned class before your baptism. Please come with your lessons completed and ready to dive in and talk about what is happening in your life.

A Couple of Things to Remember

In light of all you’ve been learning these past weeks, I’ll be asking this week if you if you’re ready to be baptized, and what the next steps look like.

HOW TO PREPARE A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

A carefully planned testimony empowered by the Holy Spirit is so important in any situation where you are talking to others about your faith. We should try and present Christ in a clear, attractive and simple way, so that others who hear will want to know Him too and want to know how to know Him personally too. Your baptism is a powerful opportunity for you to share the Good News in your life.

When you are Asked to Share Your Testimony Be Sure to: Share it with a love and enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Speak loudly and clearly in a natural relaxed tone of voice. Avoid mannerisms when you speak like, rubbing your nose, shuffling around in the water, clearing your throat, “uhs...yeah so...” etc.

Avoid preaching at people, let God do the convicting. Present a snapshot of your faith journey. Smile! It’s a profound and joy-filled time! Ask God to give you a happy radiant face.

Practice and memorize your testimony until it comes naturally.

DO’s and DON’Ts of a 3-Minute Testimony

DO Ask God to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5 – 6). Follow a 3-point outline, “My Life With Christ.”

1. Life before knowing Christ
2. How you came to know Christ (be specific)
3. Life after you received Christ (changes He made – what He means to you now).
Emphasize #3 if you became a Christian as a small child.

Begin with an interesting, attention getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. Include relevant, though provoking real life facts and experiences. Write so that others will relate to your past and present experiences. Give enough details to be interesting. Use at least one, but at the most two Scripture verses and how they impact you. Edit carefully and rewrite if you need to before you make a final draft.

DON’T Use Christian jargon that others might not understand. Words like “saved,” “converted,” “born-again,” and “sin” don’t communicate truth to the average non-Christian. Though these words are understood by us, they’re often misunderstood and then ridiculed by non-Christians. Use language anyone can understand.

Be too wordy, beat around the bush, or emphasize on how bad you used to be. Who you are now is more important. Speak in glittering generalities. Avoid words like, “wonderful” and “glorious.” Explain what you mean.

Mention church denominations, especially in a negative way, or speak critically or negatively about any other individual or group.

Give the impression that the Christian life is perfect or all a “bed of roses.”

NOTES