

onechurch

bigIdea

There tends to be a lot of confusion surrounding baptism. And while the topic often evokes strong emotions, it is not a subject in which people have much to draw from, other than their own experience. For this reason we will spend some time exploring what the Bible has to say about baptism and how this informs our understanding of this universal Christian practice. If you are a follower of Christ and baptism is still on your “to-do” list, this message may be the nudge you need to finally identify with Jesus and ‘put on the jersey’.



BIG IDEA: Baptizing is identifying with Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Jerseys, book jackets, and uniforms identify a person or a thing? Tell of a time in which you misjudged ‘a book by its cover.’
2. What are some teams or clubs that you have identified with in your past?
3. If you grew up going to church, talk about your perceptions of baptism and whether they were influenced by a particular tradition. If you didn’t grow up going to church, what did you think of baptism?
4. Do you agree with the way oneChurch baptizes believers or does it make you uncomfortable? Explain.
5. If you’ve been baptized since accepting Christ, talk about your experience. Were you nervous? How did it benefit you?
6. *Read Matthew 28:16–20.* Why would Jesus place such an emphasis on a public profession of faith through baptism?
7. *Read Acts 8:26-40.* This Ethiopian official was on a spiritual journey that took him thousands of miles from his home. Share about your spiritual journey to God. What places did it take you? What questions did you ask?
Step 1 in our spiritual journey is, “I’m interested.” We don’t know why this intelligent, influential man was searching for answers ... maybe he had come to the point of realizing his money and power weren’t enough. Regardless, the Ethiopian was in the beginning stage of his spiritual journey—a desire for information.
8. In what ways do people show their interest in spiritual things today?
9. Chris said, “Every day, 1/3rd of the people are interested in spiritual things, especially when they have a major life change happen.” Name some life changes that you think make people open to God and church.
10. *Read Isaiah 53.* The Ethiopian treasurer was reading this passage. Read this chapter and note all of the ways Jesus fits the picture of the One described here as the Suffering Servant? If you were Philip using Isaiah 53, what would you emphasize?

Step 2 in our spiritual journey is, “I’m listening.” This is where we comprehend religious facts, but not their meaning.

11. How did Philip respond to the questions of the Ethiopian official? A. hostile B. welcoming. How should we respond to questions about our faith today? (*Read 1 Peter 3:15*)

Step 3 in our spiritual journey is, “I get it.” The message resonates. It is an ‘aha!’ moment where the light bulb turns on and we are moved to do something.



12. What did God do in Acts 8:26-40? What did Philip do? What did the Ethiopian official do? What does this teach you about how God operates through people? From this story, as well as Acts 3:6-16 and 2:5-14, how does God set up opportunities to share our faith? How can this awareness free you from fears in sharing your faith?

Step 4 in our spiritual journey is, "I own it." This is where we move beyond faith and facts to action.

13. Read James 2:14-26. If your faith has never moved you to act, what does that say about your faith?
14. If you haven't been baptized, how do you think your story of coming to faith in Jesus might benefit others?
15. What do you think is happening to the person being baptized at that moment if anything? What do you think should be happening?
16. Read the following statement: "Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It is an outward symbol of an inward decision that identifies you with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and with the church." Does this statement reflect your understanding of the meaning of baptism? Why or why not?
17. Read Matthew 28:19 and Romans 6:3-4. What aspects of the meaning of baptism have you come to appreciate more as a result of these passages and from the message on Sunday?
18. If someone asked you who could and should be baptized, what would you tell them? Have you been baptized? When? What was the effect of the baptism on your Christian life (if any)?

THINK ABOUT IT

Where are you at on your own spiritual journey? Are you interested? Are you listening? Do you get it? Do you own it? Are you willing to tell about it?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Baptism isn't a condition of salvation; it's evidence of salvation. If you're a Christian and you've never been baptized, you need to be baptized. It's a point of obedience. What's stopping you? To sign up for baptism, go to www.oneChurch.tv and click on *Next Steps*.

95% of people would go to church if someone just invited them. So invite them! Consider being a Philip to someone this week. We all have people around us who need to hear the good news that God isn't mad at them. We all have people around us who need to hear about Jesus. Someone was a Philip to you—they told you about Jesus. They invited you to a church where you heard about Jesus. So will you be a Philip to someone else?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36-38

