

HILL TO DIE ON

WHERE EVERYTHING CHANGED

HILL TO DIE ON, PART 6: GOING PUBLIC

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.

BIG IDEA: Baptizing is identifying with Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. 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?
2. Have you been baptized? What was your experience?
3. [With your Bible or the BibleApp, read Acts 8:26-40.](#)

As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, "Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza." So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship. He was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and walk along beside the carriage." Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The man replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him. The passage of Scripture he had been reading was this: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. 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 8:26-40 \(NLT\)](#)

4. 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.

5. In what ways do people show their interest in spiritual things today?
6. Chris said, "Every day, 1/3rd of 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.
7. *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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. *Read James 2:14-26.* If your faith has never moved you to act, what does that say about your faith?
11. If you haven't been baptized, how do you think your story of coming to faith in Jesus might benefit others?
12. What do you think is happening to the person being baptized at that moment if anything? What do you think should be happening?
13. [With your Bible or the BibleApp, read Matthew 28:16-20.](#)

Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted! Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the 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."

[Matthew 28:16-20 \(NLT\)](#)

14. Why did Jesus consider it important for people to go public with their faith and be baptized?
15. Who should be baptized? Infants, children, adults?
16. What is the connection between baptism and salvation? Is baptism necessary for salvation?
17. Is the method of baptism important? Why or why not?
18. If you haven't been baptized, how do you think your story of coming to faith in Jesus might benefit others?

MOVING FORWARD

Think about the countless people who have shared in the Christian practice of baptism, from a remote tribe in Pakistan to a church in Clarksville, Tennessee. How does it make you feel to be connected in this way, not only with Christ, but also with Christians throughout the centuries?

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. So what's stopping you? Have you gone public with your faith? Are you ready to be baptized? Text Baptism1C to 97000 and someone will contact you and have a conversation about being baptized!

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?" And they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36-38