

Second Experience [water]

GOAL – Discover what baptism is all about.

Here's water. Why can't I be baptized? – Acts 8:36 (The Message)

CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

1.

1. What are you thankful for this week?

2.

1. What has been challenging for you recently?

FOLLOW-UP

3.

3. Did you share with someone else what you learned from Jesus? How did it go?

A NEW IDENTITY

Jesus often used symbols and parables to illustrate deeper truths. Baptism is one of the few explicit “rituals” Jesus gave us. This experience is symbolic of the spiritual transformation Jesus makes in our life. When a caterpillar goes into a cocoon, it leaves an old identity behind. As it emerges from the cocoon as a butterfly, its old life is gone. A new life begins. Baptism is like that. It is an illustration of a person emerging out of their old life and realizing their new identity as a beloved son or daughter of God. For many people, baptism is a totally new experience. For others, being baptized as an adult is like a personal “renewal” of a Christian tradition in their family. Regardless of your family’s spiritual tradition, you can experience baptism in a way that honors your family and propels you onward in your new identity in Jesus. Let’s start with a story that illustrates this powerful experience.

²⁶ As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, “Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.”²⁷ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. The eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and he was now returning. Seated in his carriage, he was reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and walk along beside the carriage.”

³⁰ Philip ran over and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The man replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” And he urged Philip to come up into the carriage and sit with him.

³² 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.

³³ He was humiliated and received no justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?”³⁵ So beginning with this same Scripture, Philip told him the Good News about Jesus.

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

³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39)

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4.

4. What phrases caught your attention?

GOING DEEPER

³² “God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.³³ Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today.³⁴ For David himself never ascended into heaven, yet he said,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit in the place of honor at my right hand

³⁵ until I humble your enemies,

making them a footstool under your feet.”’

³⁶ “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷ Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our

God.”⁴⁰ Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

⁴¹ Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. (Acts 2:32-41, NLT)

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.”¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁰ 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 28:18-20, NLT).

5.

5. How did the people in these stories respond after hearing the Good News of Jesus?

6.

5. Why do you think Jesus taught us to be baptized after becoming his followers?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Jesus is more concerned about our hearts than external rituals. Baptism is not just a ceremony; it’s something you experience with Jesus by faith. Have you decided to change how you think and believe the Good News? Are you ready to experience baptism? If you have any questions or concerns about being baptized, be open with God and each other.

ACTION

Any follower of Jesus can baptize someone. If you’re going through this book with someone who wants you to baptize

them, go ahead. You have permission! Set a time and place to be baptized. (If appropriate, you can do it right now.) You might use a pool, hot tub, bathtub, etc.

Is there a way to honor and include your friends and family in your baptism? If so, invite them to the celebration!

GIVE IT AWAY

7.

7. Sharing with others what you have received from God is the greatest blessing. Who do you know who needs to hear what you learned from God in this section?

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES

To read more on this topic, you can look up:

Acts 16:16-34

Acts 22:1-16

Romans 6:1-14

Colossians 2:1-15

I Peter 3