

:: summary

Over time, many of us try new hairstyles, update our wardrobe, sculpt our bodies, buy a new car or move into a new living space, yet none of those external adjustments transform us in any fundamental way or alter the essence of who we are. A can of peaches from California that is shipped to New York and emptied into a plastic storage container is still just peaches. God, however, has the power to fundamentally transform us on a spiritual level when we put our faith in Jesus, who gives us new life and makes us into what the Bible calls a “new creation.” Like dirty clothes, we leave our old selves behind to be clothed in Jesus Christ and made new.

:: discussion

The Christian act of baptism by immersion isn’t just a religious tradition involving water, it’s an external symbol of an internal reality for those who choose to follow Jesus, moving from death to life in Christ. A person being baptized enters the water as they are, is submerged in water where the old self is “buried” with Jesus, and is then raised to new life in him as they come up out of the water as a transformed and brand new creation.

Can you name one instance in your life when you tried to make an internal, personal transformation on your own by changing something external about yourself or your circumstances? What was the result?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Contrary to our individualistic society, when we put our faith in Jesus and choose to be baptized, we are baptized into community. Entering into relationship with God also means entering into relationship with others who have made the same decision, as one people united by the same Spirit of God who makes his home in the hearts of those who believe. In our diversity, we are like parts of one body working together as a whole.

As a body of unique people in community, how can we reflect the kind of unity in its God-given diversity described in this illustration? What changes might be necessary to do this well in Christian community?

Read Galatians 3:26-27

Faith expressed by being baptized into Christ makes all who believe sons and daughters of God, children adopted into His family and made heirs to an inheritance that is eternal life with God. Being baptized *into* Christ is an intentional word choice to stress being united with him as people who are clothed in Christ. The word “clothed” means to wear or put on oneself, with the connotation of assuming the qualities of that which is worn.

With this definition in mind, what are the implications of what it means to be “clothed in Christ”?

Read Romans 6:1-11

Rebellious behavior against God’s plans for us or sin leads to death, but in Christ we are *dead to sin*, meaning sin that was once natural for us is now unnatural. When someone is baptized, the old self is put to death and buried with Jesus. Being raised to new life and clothed in Christ, therefore, is not about managing sin or behavior modification, it’s about *transformation*, meaning you are no longer what you once were.

How does Christian living as a transformed person clothed in Christ differ from religious behavior modification? What could that mean for your life in Christ?

When we are baptized into Christ it means we have been made a new creation with a new way of being and habits that reflect Jesus’ character. We are no longer what we once were - we have been transformed and fundamentally changed, united in one diverse body as we live and love in community with God and others.

