

Understanding Baptism:

Small Group Guide:

Mark 1:9-12

Opening Prayer

Begin your time together asking God to open hearts and minds to understand the significance of baptism and to deepen your commitment to Christ.

Ice Breaker

Share a memorable moment from a baptism you've witnessed or experienced. What made it meaningful to you?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. Baptism is NOT Salvation

- Baptism is a symbol of salvation, not salvation itself
- The thief on the cross was saved without being baptized
- Only Jesus Christ saves us and gets us to heaven

2. Baptism is an Act of Obedience

- It's following Jesus' command to make disciples, baptize believers, and teach His commands
- The question isn't "Do I have to?" but "Why wouldn't I want to?"

3. Baptism is a Witnessing Opportunity

- It's a public declaration of faith
- It visually represents Christ's death, burial, and resurrection
- It can be an entry point for non-believers to encounter Christ

4. Baptism is an Open Door into Church Community

- It represents commitment to Christ AND to the local church family
- It's saying "this is my spiritual home and family"

Discussion Questions:

Understanding Baptism:

1. Before this sermon, what was your understanding of baptism? Has anything changed in your perspective?
2. Why do you think some people confuse baptism with salvation? How would you explain the difference to someone?
3. The pastor asked, "Why wouldn't you want to be baptized?" How would you answer that question for yourself or for someone who is hesitant?

The Thief on the Cross

1. What does the story of the thief on the cross teach us about salvation and grace? How does this challenge or confirm your theology?
2. If baptism isn't required for salvation, why is it still important for believers?

Personal Reflection

1. Have you been baptized? If so, share your experience. What did it mean to you at the time? What does it mean to you now?
2. If you haven't been baptized, what has held you back? Are there questions or concerns you'd like to discuss with the group?

Accountability and Community

1. The pastor mentioned that baptism should lead to accountability within the church family. How comfortable are you with the idea of brothers and sisters in Christ holding you accountable? Why?
2. What does it mean to make the church your "spiritual home"? How does baptism symbolize that commitment?

Welcoming Others

1. The sermon emphasized making people feel welcome, especially non-believers. On a scale of 1-10, how welcoming do you think our church is? What can we do better?
2. Have you ever felt unwelcome at a church? How did that affect your faith journey?

Practical Applications

This Week, I Will...

Choose 1-2 actions to commit to:

- If I haven't been baptized, I will talk to a pastor or leader about taking that step
- I will reach out to someone who was recently baptized and encourage them in their faith
- I will invite someone to church who has never experienced a baptism service
- I will pray for opportunities to share my baptism story as a witnessing tool
- I will intentionally make someone feel welcome at church this week
- I will study the baptism accounts in Acts (chapters 2, 8, 10, 16, 18) to deepen my understanding
- I will have a conversation with my family about the meaning of baptism
- I will examine my heart: Is Jesus truly the priority (not just number one) in my life?

Matthew 28:19-20 "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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Prayer Points:

Pray together for:

- Anyone in your group considering baptism
- Those who need to accept Christ as their Savior
- Your church to be a welcoming place for believers and non-believers alike
- Courage to hold one another accountable in love
- Opportunities to witness through your life and testimony
- Those who have been baptized recently, that they would grow in their faith

Before Next Week:

If your group includes someone who hasn't been baptized, consider attending their baptism together as a show of support and community. If everyone has been baptized, watch a baptism service online together and discuss what stood out to you.

Leader Notes:

- Be sensitive to those who may not have been baptized yet—create a safe, non-judgmental space
- Have information ready about how someone can get baptized at your church
- Be prepared to pray with anyone who wants to accept Christ during your group time
- Consider sharing your own baptism story to open up the conversation
- Remember: the goal is understanding and encouragement, not guilt or pressure