

BELIEVERS INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Understanding Baptism

Its Biblical Foundation, Spiritual Significance, and Place in the
Life of a Believer

CENTRAL TEACHING PRINCIPLE

Baptism is a sacred ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ through which believers respond to His command, identify with His death, burial, and resurrection, and visibly declare their faith and commitment to a new life under His Lordship.

NEW BELIEVERS & DISCIPLESHIP TEACHING SERIES

Scripture-based instruction • Candidate preparation • Christian growth

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PART I — THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF BAPTISM

1. What Is Baptism?

The word *baptism* comes from the Greek word *baptisma*, related to the verb *baptizō*, commonly associated with immersing, dipping, or washing.

In the New Testament, baptism communicates more than contact with water. It carries significance concerning identification, spiritual cleansing, commitment, and the believer's relationship with God.

Romans 6:4 (KJV): “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Baptism points to a fundamental spiritual transition.

The believer is no longer to live under the controlling authority of the former sinful life but is called to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is therefore connected to three foundational realities:

- 1. Identification:** The believer identifies with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 2. Obedience:** The believer responds to the command of Jesus Christ.
- 3. Transformation:** The believer publicly embraces a life that is now directed by the Word and Spirit of God.

The act of baptism points beyond the water to the person and saving work of Jesus Christ.

Teaching Insight: The significance of baptism is not found in the water as an independent source of spiritual power. Its significance comes from Christ, whose saving work baptism proclaims and into whose name believers are baptized.

2. Baptism in the Biblical Story

Although Christian baptism was established through the ministry and command of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament contains events and practices that help us understand its theological significance.

A. Cleansing and purification

Under the Old Covenant, various ceremonial washings were associated with purification and preparation before God.

Leviticus 16:4: The high priest was instructed to wash his flesh with water before putting on sacred garments.

These ceremonial washings did not accomplish the same purpose as Christian baptism, but they established an important biblical association between washing, purification, and approaching a holy God.

Ezekiel 36:25–27 connects cleansing with God's promise to give His people a new heart and a new spirit.

God declares:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...” — Ezekiel 36:26 (KJV)

This prophetic promise anticipates the inward transformation accomplished through God's saving work.

Water can wash the exterior, but only God can renew the human heart.

B. The crossing of the Red Sea

1 Corinthians 10:1–2 describes Israel passing through the sea and being baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Paul uses Israel's experience as a theological illustration.

Their deliverance from Egypt marked a transition from slavery toward a new existence as God's covenant people.

Similarly, Christian baptism points to deliverance through Christ and the believer's new identity in Him.

However, Israel's crossing and Christian baptism are not identical events. Paul uses the historical experience as a spiritual analogy and warning for believers.

C. Noah and the flood

1 Peter 3:20–21 connects the waters of Noah's flood with baptism.

Noah and his household were brought safely through the waters by God's provision.

Peter uses this historical event to illuminate the relationship between baptism, salvation, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The consistent biblical emphasis is that salvation rests upon God's redemptive action.

Key Principle: The Old Testament prepares us to recognize that God delivers, cleanses, establishes covenant relationships, and brings people into a new way of living.

PART II — JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

3. Why Did John the Baptist Baptize?

Before Jesus began His public ministry, John the Baptist appeared preaching repentance and preparing people for the coming Messiah.

Matthew 3:1–2 (KJV): “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:4 describes John's ministry as a baptism of repentance connected with the forgiveness of sins.

John's baptism was preparatory.

It called Israel to acknowledge sin, turn toward God, and prepare for the One who would bring the promised salvation.

Understanding repentance

The Greek term *metanoia*, commonly translated *repentance*, refers to a change of mind or understanding that involves turning away from sin and toward God.

Biblical repentance is more than feeling regret.

It includes a genuine change of direction.

Acts 26:20 speaks of people repenting, turning to God, and demonstrating repentance through their deeds.

Therefore, repentance involves:

- Recognizing sin in light of God's truth.
- Turning away from sinful attitudes and practices.
- Turning toward God in faith and submission.
- Demonstrating a changed direction through the fruit of one's life.

John's message challenged people not to rely solely upon religious ancestry or outward participation.

Matthew 3:8 (KJV): “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.”

Repentance must produce corresponding evidence.

John's baptism and Christian baptism

John's baptism looked forward to the coming Messiah.

Christian baptism looks to Jesus Christ as the Messiah who has died, risen from the dead, and commissioned His disciples.

Acts 19:1–6 demonstrates this distinction. Paul encountered disciples who knew John's baptism but needed further instruction concerning Jesus Christ. They were subsequently baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Teaching Principle: John's baptism prepared people for Christ. Christian baptism openly identifies the believer with the Christ who has come.

PART III — THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

4. Why Was Jesus Baptized If He Had No Sin?

One of the most significant passages concerning baptism is Matthew 3:13–17.

Jesus came to John at the Jordan River to be baptized.

John initially resisted because he recognized the superiority of Jesus.

Matthew 3:14 (KJV): “But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?”

Jesus answered:

Matthew 3:15 (KJV): “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”

Jesus did not undergo baptism because He needed repentance or forgiveness.

Scripture declares that Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).

His baptism served several important purposes.

A. Jesus demonstrated obedience to the Father's will

Jesus consistently submitted Himself to the will and purposes of the Father.

His baptism was an act of righteousness and obedience within God's redemptive plan.

B. Jesus identified with the people He came to redeem

Although sinless, Jesus entered into the human condition and identified Himself with those He came to save.

His baptism was part of the public inauguration of His messianic ministry.

C. Jesus was publicly revealed as the beloved Son

Matthew records that when Jesus came up from the water, the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and the Father's voice was heard.

Matthew 3:17 (KJV): “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

This event reveals the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit acting in the unfolding work of redemption.

It is especially important when studying Christian baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

D. Jesus established an example of submission

Jesus' baptism demonstrates that submission to God's purpose is foundational to Kingdom living.

He did not act independently of the Father.

John 6:38 records Jesus declaring that He came not to do His own will but the will of the One who sent Him.

Kingdom Principle: Genuine spiritual authority is inseparable from obedience to God.

The baptism of Jesus teaches that Kingdom identity must be expressed through submission to the Father's will.

PART IV — BAPTISM AS A COMMAND OF JESUS CHRIST

5. The Great Commission

Following His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His disciples to make disciples among the nations.

Matthew 28:18–20 establishes the church's continuing responsibility.

Matthew 28:19 (KJV): “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Jesus did not present baptism as an optional religious activity with no relationship to discipleship.

He included it within the commission given to His church.

The Great Commission contains an integrated process:

Making disciples → Baptizing → Teaching obedience

Baptism belongs within the ongoing development of a disciple.

It is not the completion of discipleship.

It is one of the foundational expressions of entering into a life of following Jesus Christ.

Baptism and spiritual authority

Matthew 28:18 declares that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus.

Therefore, His command to baptize rests upon His authority.

When the church baptizes according to the command of Christ, it is responding to the authority of its risen Lord.

Baptism declares that the believer recognizes Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Luke 6:46 (KJV): “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Christian obedience is the appropriate response to receiving Christ's grace.

Teaching Principle: Baptism does not earn the authority of Christ. It is an act of obedience to the Christ who already possesses all authority.

PART V — THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

6. Baptism Identifies the Believer With the Death of Christ

Romans 6:3 (KJV): “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Paul connects baptism to the death of Jesus Christ.

Christ died as the sacrifice for sin.

Through faith in Him, believers are united with His saving work.

Baptism visibly expresses that identification.

The believer is declaring:

My former life is no longer the authority by which I intend to live. I belong to Jesus Christ.

This does not mean believers become incapable of sin after baptism.

Rather, they are called to recognize that sin is no longer their rightful master.

Romans 6:6 teaches that the old man was crucified with Christ so that believers should no longer serve sin.

Romans 6:11 instructs believers to consider themselves dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

The death of the old life is therefore both a spiritual reality rooted in union with Christ and a truth believers must apply in daily living.

7. Baptism Illustrates Burial With Christ

Colossians 2:12 (KJV): “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

Burial marks the finality of death.

The burial imagery in baptism communicates the believer's identification with Christ in His death.

For churches practicing immersion, going beneath the water provides a vivid physical illustration of burial.

But the spiritual reality is not produced merely by the physical movement beneath the water.

The passage emphasizes faith in the working power of God.

A vital distinction

The Christian is not simply attempting to improve the former sinful identity.

Through Christ, the believer has entered a new relationship with God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV): “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

This new creation is grounded in being *in Christ*, not in the physical properties of baptismal water.

8. Baptism Proclaims Resurrection and New Life

Water baptism does not end with burial imagery.

The believer also rises from the water.

This signifies identification with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the new life believers receive through Him.

Romans 6:4 explains that just as Christ was raised from the dead, believers are called to walk in newness of life.

The resurrection changes the direction and purpose of Christian living.

The believer is called to demonstrate:

- A renewed mind (Romans 12:2).
- A transformed manner of life (Ephesians 4:22–24).
- Obedience to the Word of God (James 1:22).
- The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).
- A commitment to righteousness (Romans 6:12–14).

Teaching Principle: Baptism represents more than what believers are leaving behind. It also declares the new life they are called to live through Jesus Christ.

PART VI — BAPTISM, SALVATION, AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

9. Does Water Baptism Save a Person?

This question requires careful attention to the whole counsel of Scripture.

The New Testament consistently teaches that salvation comes through Jesus Christ and His redemptive work.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (KJV): “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Acts 4:12 teaches that salvation is found in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9–10 connects salvation with believing in the risen Lord and confessing Him.

At the same time, several New Testament passages speak of baptism in close connection with repentance, forgiveness, and salvation.

These passages must not be ignored.

A. Acts 2:38 — Repentance, baptism, and forgiveness

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter instructed the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, promising the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38 places baptism within the response to the Gospel.

It joins repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and the promised Spirit in Peter's apostolic proclamation.

Christians have historically differed in how they understand baptism's precise relationship to the reception of forgiveness.

Some understand baptism as a means through which God communicates His saving grace.

Others understand it as the commanded outward expression of repentance and faith through which salvation has already been received.

Both readings recognize baptism's importance within the New Testament.

B. 1 Peter 3:21 — Baptism and salvation

Peter expressly connects baptism with salvation, while explaining that its significance is not ordinary physical washing.

He connects baptism with an appeal or response of a good conscience toward God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This shows that baptism cannot be reduced to the removal of dirt from the body.

Its saving significance must be understood in relation to the risen Christ and the believer's response to God.

C. Acts 10:44–48 — The Holy Spirit before water baptism

While Peter preached to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit came upon those hearing the Word.

Peter then commanded them to be baptized in water.

This passage demonstrates that God's action through the Holy Spirit is not confined to a fixed sequence in which water must always come first.

Nevertheless, Peter still directed these believers to receive water baptism.

D. The thief on the cross

Luke 23:39–43 records Jesus promising paradise to a repentant criminal who turned to Him in faith.

There is no account of that man receiving Christian water baptism.

This passage demonstrates the saving authority of Jesus Christ and cautions against treating baptism as a mechanical act that limits God's ability to save.

Understanding these truths together

Water baptism is a solemn, commanded response to the Gospel.

It should not be dismissed as spiritually unimportant.

Neither should the water be treated as an independent source of salvation apart from Jesus Christ.

The central question must always remain:

Have I genuinely turned to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and am I responding to Him in obedience?

Foundational Principle: Jesus Christ is the Savior. Baptism bears witness to His saving work and belongs to the life of faith and obedience He commands.

PART VII — WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

10. The New Testament Pattern of Belief and Baptism

Throughout the Book of Acts, baptism frequently follows the preaching of the Gospel, the reception of the Word, and the response of faith.

Example One: Pentecost

Acts 2:41: Those who gladly received Peter's word were baptized.

This establishes a pattern of receiving the Gospel and responding through baptism.

Example Two: The Samaritans

Acts 8:12: When the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized.

Their baptism followed their response to the Gospel.

Example Three: The Ethiopian official

Acts 8:26–39: Philip explained the Scriptures and proclaimed Jesus to the Ethiopian official.

After hearing the Gospel, the official requested baptism.

Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

This account demonstrates the connection between understanding the Gospel, responding in faith, and receiving baptism.

Example Four: The Philippian jailer

Acts 16:25–34: The jailer asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved.

They directed him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and spoke the Word of the Lord to his household.

The account then records baptism.

Believer's baptism and infant baptism

Many evangelical, Baptist, and Pentecostal churches practice **believer's baptism**, generally understanding baptism as following a person's conscious profession of faith.

Other Christian traditions baptize infants within their understanding of covenant, grace, and the church, drawing upon broader theological reasoning and passages concerning households.

The New Testament household baptism accounts do not explicitly establish the presence or absence of infants in every instance.

For a congregation practicing believer's baptism, the ordinary process is to instruct a person in the Gospel, receive a credible profession of faith, and baptize that believer.

Teaching Principle: In the believer's baptism tradition, baptism follows personal repentance and faith and is accompanied by continued discipleship.

PART VIII — BAPTISM AND COVENANT IDENTITY

11. Baptism Declares Belonging to Jesus Christ

Baptism is not merely a declaration that an individual has adopted a religious belief.

It openly identifies that person with Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:26–27 teaches that believers are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ and speaks of those baptized into Christ as having put on Christ.

The imagery of putting on Christ communicates identification with Him.

A believer's identity is now to be shaped by the person, teachings, and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

What changes about our identity?

Before Christ: Humanity is separated from God by sin and in need of redemption (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1–3).

Through Christ: Believers receive forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, and new life (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:1; Galatians 4:4–7).

As disciples of Christ: Believers are called to live consistently with their new identity (Colossians 3:1–17).

Baptism visibly identifies the believer with this new covenant community.

A distinction concerning covenant

Christian baptism and Old Testament circumcision are discussed together in **Colossians 2:11–12**.

Christian traditions interpret the covenant relationship between these signs differently.

Nevertheless, the passage clearly emphasizes spiritual transformation through Christ rather than confidence in an external ritual alone.

1 Corinthians 12:13 also connects the work of the Spirit with incorporation into one body.

The believer does not enter the Christian life as an isolated individual.

Salvation introduces a person into relationship with Christ and His people.

Baptism and church membership

Water baptism and formal membership in a local congregation should not be treated as identical concepts.

Baptism identifies a believer with Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

Church membership ordinarily involves entering an accountable relationship with a particular local congregation.

For Believers International Ministries, baptism should therefore be connected to ongoing discipleship, Christian fellowship, spiritual growth, and responsible participation in the life of the church.

PART IX — THE METHOD AND NAME OF BAPTISM

12. Why Do Many Churches Baptize by Immersion?

Immersion is commonly practiced because of the meaning associated with *baptizō*, New Testament baptism narratives, and the burial-and-resurrection imagery of Romans 6.

Matthew 3:16 records Jesus coming up from the water after His baptism.

Acts 8:38–39 describes Philip and the Ethiopian official going into and coming out of the water.

These passages are consistent with immersion, although descriptions of entering and leaving water do not by themselves settle every question concerning the method.

What does immersion represent?

Entering the water: The believer is presenting himself or herself for baptism in obedience to Christ.

Being submerged: This vividly portrays identification with Christ in His death and burial.

Coming out of the water: This depicts identification with His resurrection and the calling to live a new life.

Other Christian churches practice pouring or sprinkling, drawing on historical Christian practice and biblical cleansing imagery.

Churches should teach their own practice clearly while recognizing that Christians have differed on the mode of baptism.

13. In Whose Name Are Believers Baptized?

Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize:

Matthew 28:19 (KJV): “...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The Book of Acts also describes people being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus.

See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5.

Understanding the passages

Matthew 28:19 provides the explicit baptismal command of the risen Jesus.

The passages in Acts emphasize Jesus Christ as the One whom the apostles proclaimed and with whom believers identified.

Many Trinitarian churches understand these passages as complementary: baptism is performed in accordance with Jesus' command and upon the confession of His Lordship.

Some Oneness Pentecostal traditions understand the passages as requiring the spoken baptismal formula to use the name of Jesus.

This is an important distinction among Christian traditions and should be taught with care.

For a Trinitarian congregation, the baptismal declaration commonly follows Matthew 28:19 while clearly acknowledging that salvation is through Jesus Christ.

PART X — WATER BAPTISM AND THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

14. Understanding the Different New Testament Uses of Baptism

The New Testament speaks of baptism in more than one context.

It is important not to treat every reference as though it describes precisely the same event.

A. John's baptism

John's baptism was associated with repentance and preparation for the Messiah.

Scriptures: Mark 1:4; Acts 19:3–4.

B. Christian water baptism

Christian water baptism is commanded by the risen Christ and identifies believers with Him.

Scriptures: Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12; Romans 6:3–4.

C. Baptism with the Holy Spirit

John the Baptist declared that the coming Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33.

Jesus reiterated this promise to His disciples.

Acts 1:5 (KJV): “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Jesus then told them:

Acts 1:8 (KJV): “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...”

The Holy Spirit empowers believers for witness, equips them for service, and works in their lives to produce holiness and spiritual fruit.

Acts 2:1–4 records the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Acts 10:44–48 records the Holy Spirit coming upon Gentile believers.

Is Holy Spirit baptism separate from salvation?

Christian traditions have different understandings.

Many Pentecostal and charismatic Christians teach a distinct empowering experience of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

Other Christians understand baptism in the Holy Spirit primarily as the Spirit's work of incorporating a person into Christ at conversion, drawing particularly upon 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Scripture clearly establishes that the Holy Spirit is essential to Christian life.

Romans 8:9 teaches that belonging to Christ and the presence of His Spirit are inseparable.

The New Testament also commands believers to continue being filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 calls believers to be filled with the Spirit.

The presence of spiritual gifts must never be used as a substitute for spiritual character.

Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

The mature Christian life requires both dependence upon the Spirit's power and obedience to His sanctifying work.

D. What about baptism with fire?

Matthew 3:11–12 refers to baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Because the surrounding passage includes judgment imagery, Christians should be cautious about assuming that baptism with fire always refers to spiritual excitement or an additional empowering experience.

Some understand the reference to include purification, while others emphasize the judgment context.

The tongues described as fire in Acts 2:3 should also be studied in their own context rather than automatically equated with every biblical reference to fire.

Teaching Principle: Water baptism and the Holy Spirit's work are deeply connected to Christian initiation and life, but water baptism itself is not the source of the Holy Spirit's power.

PART XI — WHAT BAPTISM DOES NOT MEAN

15. Correcting Common Misunderstandings

Misunderstanding One: “I must become perfect before I can be baptized.”

Baptism is not reserved for people who have achieved sinless perfection.

It is connected to repentance, faith, and obedience to Christ.

1 John 1:9 teaches believers the importance of confessing sin and trusting God's forgiveness.

The believer is called to grow in holiness, not to pretend that spiritual growth is already complete.

Misunderstanding Two: “Once I am baptized, I will never struggle with temptation again.”

Baptism does not eliminate the believer's responsibility to resist temptation.

Galatians 5:16 commands believers to walk in the Spirit rather than fulfill the desires of the flesh.

James 1:12–15 addresses the nature and danger of temptation.

Christian maturity requires ongoing obedience and dependence upon God's grace.

Misunderstanding Three: “Baptism is simply joining a church.”

Water baptism identifies a person with Jesus Christ.

Although closely connected with the fellowship of believers, its meaning is greater than registration in a local church.

Romans 6:3–4 places the emphasis upon Christ's death and resurrection.

Misunderstanding Four: “My baptism has no relationship to how I live afterward.”

Scripture joins identification with Christ to practical transformation.

Colossians 3:1–10 instructs believers to set their minds on things above and put away conduct associated with their former lives.

Baptism should never become a substitute for discipleship.

Misunderstanding Five: “I need to be baptized repeatedly whenever I sin.”

The New Testament does not command believers to repeat Christian baptism after every failure.

Instead, believers are instructed to repent, confess sin, receive God's forgiveness, and continue walking in obedience.

1 John 1:7–9; Hebrews 12:1–2.

Questions about baptism following an earlier baptism, infant baptism, or a subsequent genuine conversion should be discussed with church leadership in accordance with the congregation's biblical convictions.

PART XII — PREPARING FOR WATER BAPTISM

16. How Should a New Believer Prepare?

The Book of Acts demonstrates a strong connection between receiving the Gospel and responding through baptism.

A believer should understand the meaning of the decision rather than participate solely because of social pressure or religious custom.

Step One — Understand the Gospel

Recognize that all have sinned and need salvation.

Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23.

Understand that Jesus Christ died for sin and rose again.

1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

Understand that salvation rests upon God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9.

Step Two — Respond in repentance and faith

Turn toward God and place faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9–10.

Step Three — Receive biblical instruction concerning baptism

Study the command of Jesus, the apostolic examples, and the meaning of union with Christ.

Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:38–41; Romans 6:1–11.

Step Four — Publicly confess faith in Jesus Christ

Baptism provides a visible opportunity to identify openly with the Lord.

Romans 10:9–10; Matthew 10:32.

The church may appropriately invite a short profession of faith or personal testimony.

Step Five — Receive water baptism

Participate in baptism according to the scriptural convictions and established practices of the congregation.

Acts 8:36–39.

Step Six — Continue in discipleship

After baptism, continue growing through Scripture, prayer, fellowship, worship, and obedience.

Acts 2:42 (KJV): “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Baptism should lead into a sustained pattern of Christian growth.

PART XIII — THE LIFE AFTER BAPTISM

17. Living in the Reality of Your New Life

Baptism is a significant milestone, but Christian discipleship continues throughout life.

The believer must continue learning how to live consistently with the identity received through Christ.

A. Develop spiritual discipline

2 Timothy 2:15 calls believers to handle the Word of truth responsibly.

Develop a consistent practice of Scripture reading, biblical study, prayer, and worship.

B. Renew the mind

Romans 12:2 instructs believers not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

A new life in Christ requires continual transformation in thoughts, attitudes, priorities, and conduct.

C. Walk in holiness

1 Peter 1:15–16 calls God's people to holy conduct.

Holiness is not merely external behavior. It concerns a life increasingly ordered according to God's character and truth.

D. Remain connected to the body of Christ

Hebrews 10:24–25 calls believers to encourage one another and remain committed to Christian fellowship.

Believers need instruction, encouragement, accountability, and opportunities to serve.

E. Become a witness for Jesus Christ

Acts 1:8 connects the power of the Holy Spirit with the church's calling to bear witness to Christ.

A baptized believer should increasingly demonstrate the Gospel through both words and actions.

F. Continue growing into spiritual maturity

Ephesians 4:11–16 describes Christ's provision for equipping believers and building up His body toward maturity.

The goal of discipleship is not simply attendance at religious services.

It is growing in the knowledge, character, obedience, and likeness of Jesus Christ.

Kingdom Principle: The public confession made through baptism should be supported by the private and daily practice of following Christ.

PART XIV — QUESTIONS FOR BAPTISM CANDIDATES

Before participating in baptism, each candidate should be able to reflect upon the following questions:

- 1. Who is Jesus Christ, and what do I believe concerning His death and resurrection?
- 2. What does it mean to repent of sin?
- 3. Have I personally placed my faith in Jesus Christ?
- 4. Why did Jesus command His followers to be baptized?
- 5. What does baptism represent concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection?
- 6. What does it mean for me to walk in newness of life?
- 7. Do I understand that baptism is connected to a life of continuing discipleship?
- 8. Am I willingly presenting myself for baptism as an expression of faith and obedience?

These questions are intended for instruction and spiritual conversation, not as an examination of theological expertise.

A new believer does not need to understand every doctrine of Christianity before being baptized.

The essential aim is a genuine response to the Gospel and a willingness to follow Jesus Christ.

PART XV — SCRIPTURAL REVIEW

Core Passages for Study and Memorization

Scripture	Teaching Emphasis
Matthew 3:13–17	Jesus' baptism and His obedience to the Father
Matthew 28:18–20	Christ's command to make disciples and baptize
Mark 1:4–8	John's baptism and the promise of the Holy Spirit
Acts 2:37–41	Repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and faith
Acts 8:12–39	Belief and baptism in the early church
Acts 10:44–48	The Holy Spirit and water baptism
Romans 6:1–11	Identification with Christ's death and resurrection

Scripture	Teaching Emphasis
1 Corinthians 12:13	The Holy Spirit and the one body of Christ
Colossians 2:11–12	Burial and resurrection with Christ through faith
Galatians 3:26–27	Faith, baptism, and identity in Christ
Ephesians 2:8–10	Salvation by grace and the resulting life of good works
1 Peter 3:18–22	Baptism, conscience, and the resurrection of Christ

Five Foundational Truths to Remember

Truth 1 — Baptism is commanded by Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19–20.

Truth 2 — Baptism identifies believers with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Romans 6:3–4.

Truth 3 — Baptism belongs to the believer's response of repentance, faith, and obedience to the Gospel. Acts 2:38–41.

Truth 4 — Baptism declares allegiance to Jesus Christ and identification with His people. Galatians 3:26–27.

Truth 5 — Baptism calls believers to continue walking in newness of life. Romans 6:4; Colossians 3:1–17.

PART XVI — CLASS DISCUSSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

Discussion Question One: Why is Jesus' baptism important even though He was without sin?

Read Matthew 3:13–17 and Hebrews 4:15.

Discussion Question Two: How does Romans 6 connect baptism to daily Christian living?

Read Romans 6:1–14.

Discussion Question Three: What does Scripture teach about the relationship between repentance, faith, and baptism?

Read Acts 2:37–41 and Acts 10:44–48.

Discussion Question Four: How should a believer's life demonstrate identification with Jesus Christ?

Read Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1–17.

Discussion Question Five: Why is continued discipleship necessary after baptism?

Read Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 2:42.

Personal Reflection

Consider the following:

What does surrendering my life to Jesus Christ mean in practical terms?

What patterns, behaviors, or attitudes must be brought under the authority of God's Word?

How can my life increasingly reflect Christ's character?

What steps will I take to grow spiritually after baptism?

CONCLUSION — BAPTISM IS A DECLARATION OF A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Baptism occupies an important place in the Christian faith because Jesus Christ commanded it and the apostles faithfully practiced it.

It joins the believer's response of faith to a visible proclamation of the Gospel.

Through baptism, the church bears witness to the saving work of Christ, and the believer openly identifies with the One who died and rose again.

Its spiritual significance cannot be reduced to water, ceremony, church attendance, or public recognition.

Its central focus is Jesus Christ.

The believer is called to recognize that the former life no longer defines the direction of the new life in Christ.

The Christian is now called to walk in faith, righteousness, obedience, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:4 (KJV): "...even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Baptism is a sacred expression of faith and obedience, but it is not the end of the believer's journey.

It points toward a lifetime of knowing Jesus Christ, growing in His Word, participating in His church, and living under His Lordship.

Final Declaration:

My life belongs to Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, I have been called into newness of life. I renounce the dominion of sin, embrace the truth of God's Word, and commit myself to follow Jesus Christ in faith, obedience, and love. I will continue to grow in the knowledge of God and walk by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the gift of salvation through Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Thank You for revealing the depth of Your love through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Grant us understanding of the sacred significance of baptism. Let our participation never be reduced to religious tradition without genuine faith, repentance, and obedience.

Teach us to understand our new identity in Jesus Christ.

Strengthen every believer to turn away from sin, walk in righteousness, and submit daily to the authority of Your Word.

Holy Spirit, continue to transform our hearts, renew our minds, and empower us to live as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

May our lives demonstrate the reality of the Gospel we confess.

Establish us in truth, mature us in faith, and unite us in the fellowship of Your Church.

In the name of Jesus Christ,

Amen.

BELIEVERS INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

Understanding Baptism — New Believers & Discipleship Teaching Series

Primary Bible Translation for Direct Quotations: King James Version (KJV).