

Baptism

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Sermon on Baptism by Pastor Peter Watson | 2 |
| Key Slides from the sermon | 2 |
| The Journey of Baptism: Starting Point | 4 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Some more basics about baptism | 4 |
| Why be baptised? | 5 |
| Obedience to Christ and Identifying With his Example | 5 |
| Outer symbol of an inner transformation | 6 |
| Commitment to the faith community | 6 |
| Am I ready to take the plunge? | 7 |
| Do I believe in Jesus Christ as Lord? | 7 |
| Am I committed to a lifestyle that displays that belief? | 8 |
| Do I believe that mission and ministry flows through (and beyond) the local church? Do I believe that I have a role to play in that? | 9 |
| What if I have been christened as an infant or baptised previously? | 9 |
| How do I know that I am ready? | 10 |
| Are you nervous about the public nature of baptism? | 11 |
| Do you feel that you are being set too high a standard? | 12 |
| Do you feel that you don't know enough about Jesus? | 13 |
| Are there aspects of the church that you're not sure about? | 13 |
| What do I do with my 'old' life? | 14 |
| What does baptism look like? | 14 |
| Why immersion? | 14 |
| Should it happen in the church building? Can I be baptised elsewhere? | 14 |
| What is important in a baptism service? | 15 |
| Public witness | 15 |
| Church involvement | 15 |
| Words | 16 |
| Who performs the baptism? | 16 |
| Now that I'm dry, what now? | 16 |
| New Testament Bible Passages on Baptism | 18 |

Sermon on Baptism by Pastor Peter Watson

It is **highly recommended** that you watch this message on baptism by Pastor Peter Watson. It outlines how Baptism fits into salvation and has a section at the end where people ask questions about Baptism.



You can find the message at <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/churches-of-christ-who-are-we/> or go direct to the message on our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/tg2B2MPTgxQ> or scan the QR code.

You also may find it helpful to review the last section of this handout that has a list of the verses in the bible that deal with baptism so you can make up your own mind about what the bible teaches.

Key Slides from the sermon

Role of Conscience in Romans 14

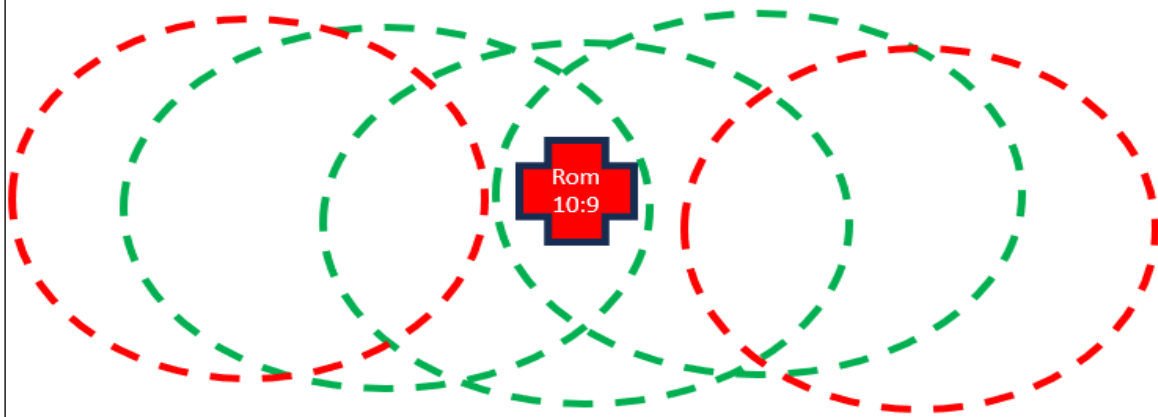
⁵ One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be **fully convinced in their own mind**.

¹⁴ I am **convinced**, being **fully persuaded** in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.

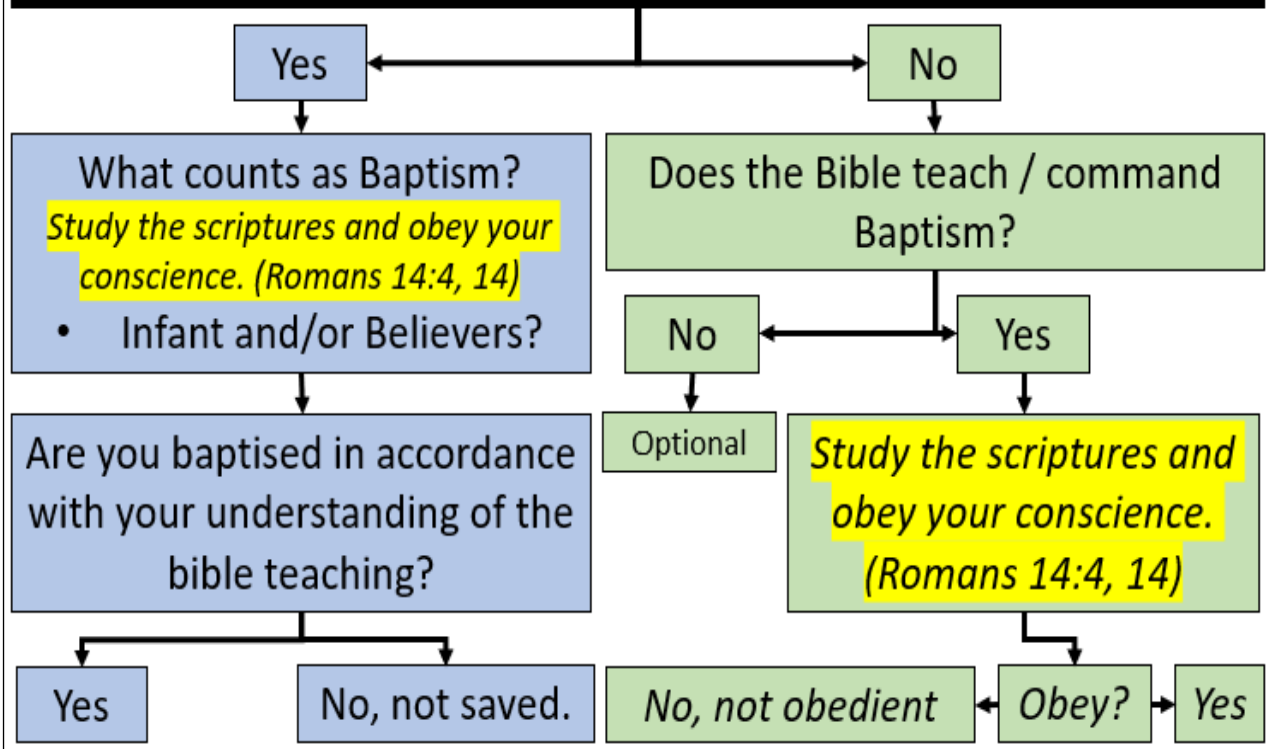
You are accountable for what you in good conscience believe.

Romans 10:9

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.



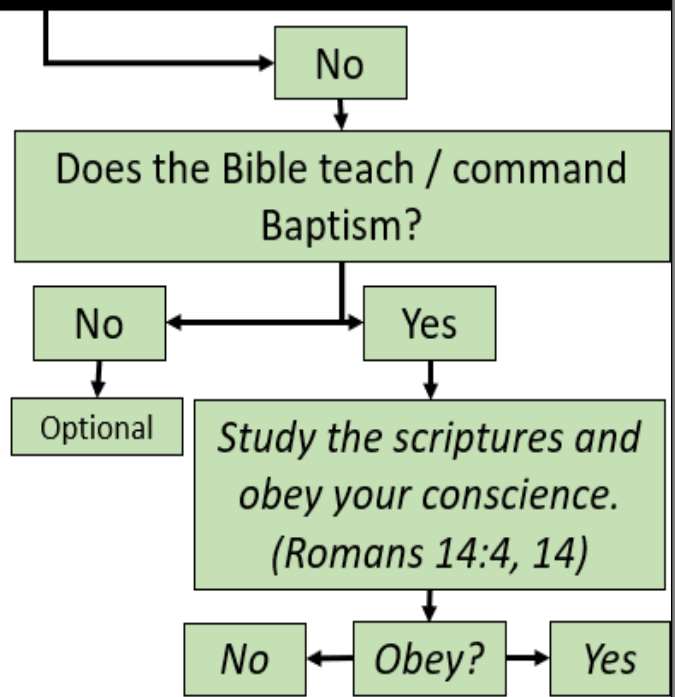
Is Baptism essential for salvation?



Is Baptism essential for salvation?

Five Things to Consider

1. The Bible Commands It
2. Jesus modelled it.
3. It was the normal response of Christians in Acts.
4. It is a powerful witness to others that you are declaring Jesus is Lord.
5. A personal blessing.



The Journey of Baptism: Starting Point¹

Introduction

The imagery of journeys and quests is important in popular culture. Film series such as *The Lord of The Rings* and *Harry Potter* have popularised the idea of individuals growing through the themes of community and journey. These two themes suggest that an individual's potential to complete a journey or quest is improved when they are part of a community that shares the same values.

So, what does this have to do with baptism?

In baptism, we have joined with a like-minded community who share that goal of being Christlike. The words commonly spoken as a person is baptised (*I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*) also remind us that community is central to God's nature. Baptism is a significant marker on your journey to *be like Jesus*. It is not a marker that says, "I've made it". Nor is it restricted to the past, having no impact on our present or future. Baptism both speaks to our community and challenges us to go out into that community.

As you read this, we encourage you to think about your journey: is it leading you closer to Jesus? Is baptism an important part of that journey? Why is that? Why not? The following – we trust – will help you to better understand baptism and the journey you are on.

"A working definition of Baptism: Baptism is an act of immersion that represents Christ's death of your old life of going our own way. As we come out of the water, it represents Christ's resurrection and our own resurrection into a new journey of following and imitating Christ."

Some more basics about baptism

The word baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizo*, which means to immerse. Churches of Christ baptise by immersing a person in water. However, there is another level to the word baptism: to be immersed in the things of God and overwhelmed by the power, love and faithfulness of God. This is a key message of baptism².

For many, their baptism occurred in a packed church service. They descended the steps of the baptistry into the water where a church leader awaited them, spoke about the meaning of baptism, and then baptised them. They would emerge, blinking and spluttering, to the encouragement of a smiling congregation. It sounds simple enough, right?

Some, however, see baptism as daunting, or even scary. Baptism is a moment of faith that should be shared with family and friends and celebrated with much joy in recognising the work of God's Spirit in our lives³. The more you understand baptism, the more you can celebrate it, and the less daunting it will seem.

¹ Adapted from 'Journey of Baptism' published by Council of Churches of Christ in Australia © 2010. All rights reserved. Created by Craig Brown in 2010

² Penny Galbraith, *Water Dreaming*, Ringwood Church of Christ, P.1

³ Ibid

“Baptizo = Immerse”

Questions

- Baptism is significant marker on your journey to be like Jesus. What other ‘markers’ have been important to you as you reflect on your journey with Jesus?
- As you think about baptism, what would you like to understand more about it?

Why be baptised?

Obedience to Christ and Identifying With his Example

We don’t want you to think about obedience in the sense that baptism is something that you have to do. Baptism is an action that signifies the grace of Jesus in your life. To get baptised just because “you have to” could make it a mere religious ritual. In the New Testament, Jesus disapproved of such empty obedience. In fact, He came to replace automatic responses to rituals with a living relationship with Him. Baptism becomes a continuing journey of relating to and obeying Christ.

When we decide we want to make a decision to follow Jesus by living as he lived, we should consider how Jesus lived, spoke and interacted with God and others. When we conclude that Jesus’ way of living is the optimum way to live, we will follow his example. Following the example of Jesus is a great way to begin to describe what obedience is about. Obedience is a living relationship with Jesus, not a set of actions that we perform out of habit. Baptism, therefore, is part of that obedient, living relationship with Jesus.

Jesus’ baptism is an example we can broadly follow. Jesus’ baptism is, of course, different to ours: we are not having our claim to be the Messiah confirmed! Jesus’ baptism was done out of obedience to God and to identify with the people around Him. These reasons are applicable to us, and echo throughout this booklet.

Matthew 3:13-17⁴

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Mark 1:9-13

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him

⁴ All bible verses are from the New International Version (NIV) of the bible and are available online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Luke 3:21-22

²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

Questions

- How do you feel when you read the word ‘obedience’?
- What would you say is the main reason for you to get baptised as you consider baptism?
- Based on the verses regarding Jesus’ baptism, what do you think motivated Jesus?

Outer symbol of an inner transformation

Baptism is a key symbol within Churches of Christ. A symbol (a more ‘religious’ word is sacrament) simply means: A visible action representing God’s grace in our life. One of the statements we are making by being baptised is that our life is being immersed in Christ, that His grace and love is flowing over us, just as the water flows over us.

Commitment to the faith community

We in the industrial world are rediscovering the value of being part of a tribe or community. Indigenous cultures have long understood this. We all need to belong. One of the most important things that we do when we enter into a relationship with God is to connect with others who have the same passion. In baptism, not only do we acknowledge that we ‘belong’ to Christ, we also acknowledge that we ‘belong’ to the community of God: the church. The New Testament view of church is that it is not just a building; it is a vibrant community where we learn about God, tell the stories of Jesus as He appears in our own stories, and are equipped for God’s mission in the world.

If we are serious about this journey then we will be serious about exploring how we can be involved in the church.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by^[a] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them

to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Questions

- How do you feel about the phrase 'In baptism...we also acknowledge that we belong to the community of God: the church.'?
- When you think of the church, what image first comes to mind?
- The apostle Paul here describes the church as a 'body' – what do you think are the advantages of thinking of the church in this way?

Am I ready to take the plunge?

Do I believe in Jesus Christ as Lord?

In the teachings of Jesus, He is not claiming to be just a good person, or a wise spiritual leader, or even the best of the best spiritual leaders. His claim is that He is God, that He is Lord of all. He speaks as Lord, as the supreme authority on what it takes to live a fulfilling life, both as an individual and as part of a community.

Matthew 16:13-28

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁴ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you that you are Peter,^[a] and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." ²⁰ Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Questions

- Jesus asks Peter who the crowds think he is, then asks Peter the same question ... so who do you think Jesus is, in your own words?

Am I committed to a lifestyle that displays that belief?

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount fleshes out the idea of lifestyle. In it, Jesus’ main theme is that you cannot follow Him without that decision spilling over into action. The inward shift of our primary loyalty⁵ (from self, or peer approval, or wealth) to Jesus has a visible impact on our lifestyle (such as loving our enemies, turning the other cheek to hostility, not worrying etc).

Baptism is not a guarantee that we will live perfectly. What it symbolises is that we are deciding to walk this journey with Jesus. At times we might wander down other paths, but we can always seek to go back to the journey with Jesus. Baptism is a physical reminder of our commitment to Jesus.

Matthew 5-7⁶

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Questions

- Matthew 5-7 contains a lot of teaching, and can be overwhelming to read in one go. Jot down three areas from these chapters that you think are particularly relevant to your journey at the moment.
- In Romans 12:1-2, Paul urges the Romans to keep uppermost in mind God’s mercy. How does this make you feel?

⁵ Often referred to as “lordship” – who is Lord of our lives? Us, our needs, or Jesus?

⁶ Accessible at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

Do I believe that mission and ministry flows through (and beyond) the local church? Do I believe that I have a role to play in that?

In the journey with Christ we find that we are part of a church community. What do we think of the church? Do we believe that a church is simply a building? If so, then our ministry will be limited. Buildings are static and unfeeling. If we believe that the church is the Body of Christ animated by the Spirit of Christ, then everyone who is a part of the Body is capable of ministry, and is needed in ministry. If you believe that, then you have a role to play in the church as part of the Body of Christ.

Baptism, therefore, is an individual expression of faith but one that connects us to a community travelling on the same journey.

Romans 12:3-8

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your^[a] faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”

Questions

- What do you think that Paul means when he writes each member belongs to all the others (12:5)? How does this relate to your baptism?
- As you are on the journey of following Jesus through baptism, mission and ministry, what responsibilities do you have with regards to your gifts? (12:6-8)

What if I have been christened as an infant or baptised previously?

This is best left up to a conversation between you and your church leaders. [Refer to the sermon at the beginning of this document.] Historically, some movements have baptised by immersion those who were christened as infants. As you consider baptism in a Church of Christ, we would actively encourage you and your leaders to remain open to the options that best match your desires, God’s Word and the practices of your church.

If you were baptised as a child in another Christian tradition, some key questions to ask are:

- Do I remember it?
- What did it mean to me?
- Did I understand what I was doing?

If you can't remember being baptised, then there is may be a case for you to be baptised in a Churches of Christ tradition. Again, this depends on individual circumstances and conversations with church leaders.

How do I know that I am ready?

A common objection to baptism is "I'm not ready yet". On one level, this is acceptable. If you are still unsure that you want to follow Jesus as Lord, then it is not the time for you to be baptised. Declaring Jesus as Lord is an important step – the most important of your life – and one that you should be sure of, without the added 'pressure' of baptism.

However, if you are confident that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour, and you still feel unready, then it's time to explore those feelings. With a trusted leader or friend, consider the following points:

Acts 8:26-40

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth."

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶ As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" ^[37] ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Acts 9:1-17

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who

belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³ “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Questions

- Neither the Ethiopian or Saul (later Paul) were Jesus followers for a long period of time. Do you think they had any concerns about being baptised?
- What might have they been?
- Why do you think they got baptised?

Are you nervous about the public nature of baptism?

This is understandable. However, your baptism will go a lot quicker than you imagine! Sure, it is public, but keep in mind a couple of important things:

- everyone watching you will be encouraging you; and
- for those watching who have been baptised, it will be an encouragement to them. For those who haven't been baptised, it may also help them as they consider baptism.

You won't be alone. Some of us are not 'public' people, but the presence of God's Spirit and community will assist you.

You may be asked to share your journey publicly. If you are worried about speaking in public (it could be a few words or a longer version of your journey), write it down and practice what you want to say. Your church leaders can coach you on how to cope with nerves and public speaking...especially as they have experienced the same feeling themselves!

The biblical writers linked what we confess verbally to visible actions. In Romans 10:9 Paul writes: That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord”, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. By expressing what is in our hearts, we deepen our faith – just as the act of baptism can deepen our commitment to what we believe.

Write down your story about your journey with Jesus.

Do you feel that you are being set too high a standard?

Guess what? Nobody’s perfect. Baptism doesn’t put you on a higher level from which any slip is judged more harshly. The meaning of baptism reminds us about who we are connected to: Jesus, and His death and resurrection. One of the key points of Jesus’ death and resurrection was to stand in our place, to pay the penalty for our sins and to bring us into a growing relationship with God. Grace flows through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, and into our baptism. When we stray in our journey with Jesus, baptism reminds us that we are immersed in grace, and that forgiveness can be ours.

Romans 3:21-26

²¹ But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 8:37-39

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

Questions

Romans 3:21-26 contains a lot of “theological” and complex language. In essence it means that we all fall below God’s standards at some point (3:23) but that God has out of sheer generosity...put us in right standing with himself. A pure gift. He got us out of the mess we’re in and restored us to where he always wanted us to be. And he did it by means of Jesus Christ (the Message).

- Do you think it surprises God that we slip up? Do you think this changes after baptism?
- What does it mean to you that you cannot be separated from God’s love? (Romans 8:37-39)
- What is the promise made to us in 1 John 1:9? How does this fit with the idea of God’s grace and forgiveness?

Do you feel that you don’t know enough about Jesus?

You’re right. You probably don’t know enough about Jesus. Don’t feel discouraged. Go to someone in your faith community who’s been a Christian for ten years and ask them the same question. Then ask someone who’s been a Christian for twenty years...then thirty...and you will find that they still need – and want – to know more about Jesus. Needing to know more about Jesus is a sign of a growing disciple.

How do you go about growing in the knowledge of Jesus? There are many ways, but the basis of a growing knowledge of Jesus (by knowledge, we mean a deeper relationship with Jesus rather than knowing facts about Jesus) is through spending time in the Bible, communicating with Jesus (prayer) and sharing your journey and your values (mission and justice). Ask someone in your faith community if they can help you develop a way of journeying closer to Jesus.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Questions

- Do you think you could adapt Ephesians 3:14-21 as your own personal prayer?
- Are there some areas about Jesus, faith or church you still have questions about? What are they?

Are there aspects of the church that you’re not sure about?

Communication is vital in church life. The journey towards baptism should allow you to ask questions. Your questions come from a valuable perspective, especially if you are new to church. Sometimes people who have been in the one environment stop seeing the quirks of that environment until someone new asks questions.

What do I do with my 'old' life?

People may refer to your journey of baptism as a “new life” or a “new beginning”, which suggests there is an ‘old life’ being left behind. What does the church and the Bible mean when they talk of new beginnings?

Firstly, once you have come to follow Jesus you have changed: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your primary loyalties in life have shifted, and your inner being is transforming, impacting your actions over time.

What is being left behind is behaviour that does not reflect Christ’s character. The Bible calls this repentance. This can sound hard to do, but the reality is that you are not on your own, the Holy Spirit helps you: You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit...(Romans 8:9).

What it doesn’t mean is that you leave behind your old friends, your family and other relationships. Your behaviour in these relationships may change, but your ‘new life’ will lose credibility if your old relationships don’t experience the difference.

Questions

- Are you comfortable with what you are being called to leave behind as you follow Christ in baptism?

What does baptism look like?

Why immersion?

As we’ve said, the Greek word in the New Testament indicates that immersion was the most common method of baptism. Churches of Christ practice baptism by immersion, not because of the meaning of a Greek word, but because immersion connects with the meaning of baptism.

Paul links the life and death of Jesus with baptism in Romans 6:3-5:

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

As we go under the water, it symbolises Christ’s death and our own death to the old life of going our own way. As we are raised out of the water, it symbolises Christ’s resurrection and our own ‘resurrection’ into a new journey of following and imitating Christ.

Should it happen in the church building? Can I be baptised elsewhere?

There is no biblical preference about where a baptism should occur. John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9); the apostles baptised in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41); Philip by the roadside (Acts 8:36,38) and Paul was baptised in a home (Acts 9:18). The key is that baptism is linked to belief in Jesus and a determination to journey with him, not where it occurs.

For many, if their church has a baptistry, they will get baptised there. Others may prefer a setting like a river, a lake or beach. The main thing is that you want people to witness your baptism and hear the words explaining it. More people than you think will want to attend your baptism. So, keep in mind questions like: is the location accessible? Will people be able to see and hear the baptism? Does the location include or exclude people's participation?

Questions

- How do you feel about being immersed?
- Do you understand what the symbolism is behind immersion?

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Questions

- What do you want your baptism to look like?

What is important in a baptism service?

Public witness

Baptism is not about drawing attention to yourself, but declaring to others that you are following Jesus. It's a declaration that Jesus has made a transformational impact in your life and you are on a journey to be like Jesus.

Baptism is a public display of what has happened to you internally, which underlies Romans 10:9 (belief in our heart leads to a physical declaration) and Matthew 7:24 (discipleship is about living out Jesus' words). There is another aspect to being baptised, as mentioned earlier: it reminds those witnessing your baptism of their own baptism, encouraging them to keep on their journey. Your baptism can also invite others to join on the journey of discipleship as you have.

Baptism is a symbol or, if you like, a picture of Christianity. Packed within the frames of that picture are important elements of what being a disciple of Jesus is all about: faith, community, obedience and new life⁷.

Church involvement

In some Churches of Christ, baptism is a first step before you can enter into 'official membership' of your church. 'Membership' is an old fashioned word in some ways. To

⁷ Galbraith, Page 1.

some, membership implies rights and privileges. In Churches of Christ it should mean an active participation in the mission and ministry of the church.

Therefore, having a representative from your church participate in your baptism indicates that they are committed to supporting you as you explore what your contribution to the mission of Christ will be.

Words

Symbols are important, but if people don't grasp the meaning then symbols mean nothing. The words explaining what you're doing will be important; as will parts of the Bible being read out, as will the words of the person baptising you. As they call you to respond, and you answer, these words will flesh out the meaning of baptism for those watching, some of whom may not be familiar with these Christian symbols.

Depending on your church's practice, there may be opportunity for you to briefly tell your story of your journey with Jesus ('testimony').

Who performs the baptism?

This will vary from church to church. Some churches prefer that a member of the ministry team or eldership perform your baptism. Others will allow someone who has made a significant impact on your journey to perform your baptism. This is best discussed with your church leadership.

Now that I'm dry, what now?

This is not the end of the journey. Baptism is a significant milestone, and one that you will recall often. In the Bible, significant events were given physical expressions. In the Old Testament, for example, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, they marked that event in their journey by erecting a 'memorial' altar from stones taken from the Jordan (Joshua 4:7).

Jesus wanted his disciples to remember his life, death and resurrection. To help their (and our) memory, he instituted the Lord's Supper (or communion – Luke 22:14-19). The Bible portrays these physical actions as a "fresh remembrance" – the memory and participation in these actions encourages us afresh in our journey with Jesus.

As you emerge from your baptism, you have made an important step along the path of growing closer to Christ. You have indicated in a powerful way that you want to identify with Him, the community of the church, and its mission and ministry in the world.

The following are steps you can take in partnership with your church that will help you grow on your journey with Jesus:

- Identify your gifts and abilities and develop them for ministry;
- Explore how you and your church can engage in and support mission;
- Join a small group in your church that focuses on discipleship, mission and supports each other;
- Ask questions about your prayer life, your reading of the Bible and other ways you can grow relationally closer to Jesus, and

- Be aware of opportunities to represent Christ in your relationships and your community, including areas of injustice and poverty.

Baptism is a significant step on your journey with Jesus, and one that we congratulate you for taking. It is our prayer, and the ongoing prayer of your faith community, that you keep journeying strongly with Jesus.

“This is not the end of the journey.”

Questions

- What areas in your journey with Jesus do you want to focus on?
- Have you sensed that you have some talent or giftings in a particular area?
- What can you do to explore that sense?
- Have you got someone you can talk to that can help you in developing the areas of prayer, Scripture reading, mission and justice in your life?

New Testament Bible Passages on Baptism⁸

Following are passages in the New Testament that use the word 'baptism' or related words. They are listed so you can make up your own mind about the full teaching on Baptism. Not every passage directly relates to personal baptism but they are included so you can have a full picture on the theme of baptism.

Matthew 3:5-17 (similar passage in Mark 1 & Luke 3)

5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "I baptize you with] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 21:25

25 John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'

Matthew 28:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

⁸ Added to 'Journey of Baptism' by Pastor Peter Watson

Luke 7:29

29 (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.

Luke 12:50

50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

Luke 20:4

4 John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

John 1:28

28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John 3:3-6

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

John 3:22-23

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.

John 4:1-2

1 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— 2 although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples.

Acts 1:5

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:22

22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

Acts 2:37-41

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Acts 8:12-17

12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:36-40

36 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” [37] [c] 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Acts 9:7-19

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Acts 10:34-38

34 Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

Acts 10:46b-48

Then Peter said, 47 “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 11:15-17

15 “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with[a] water, but you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit.’ 17 So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

Acts 13:23-25

23 “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. 25 As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

Acts 16:13-15

13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. 15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:31-34

31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

Acts 18:7-8

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. 8 Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

Acts 18:24-26

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

Acts 19:1-6

1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2 and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

3 So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

4 Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues[b] and prophesied.

Acts 22:14-16

14 “Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

Romans 6:1-4

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

1 Corinthians 1:13-17

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1 Corinthians 10:1-5

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor

free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Colossians 2:9-12

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh[b] was put off when you were circumcised by[c] Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

1 Peter 3:19-22

19 After being made alive,[d] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— 20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Titus 3:3-7

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.