

Week Six - *Baptism*
Colossians 2:9-15

Spend FIFTEEN - Day One

1. If an unbelieving friend were to ask you why baptism was important, what answer would you give?
2. Most Christians know that baptism is important, but we sometimes struggle with the specifics of why. To help us with this question, read Colossians 2:11-15. To what ritual does the letter writer, Paul, compare our baptism?
3. What do you know about circumcision? Do you know anything about its practice or its purpose?
4. The ritual of circumcision is introduced in Genesis 17:10-14. Go to that passage and read it. Look especially at verses 13-14. What is the purpose of circumcision?
5. If circumcision makes us a part of God's covenant (legally adopted) family, how does baptism serve a similar function?
6. At what point does someone officially become a child of God? In light of this, why do you think it was important that circumcision happen on the eighth day of someone's life? What implications does this have for our own practice of baptism?
7. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, use these words as your prayer: "God, my sin had left me broken and far from You. You could have just washed Your hands of me, but You chose to rescue me. Through baptism, You washed away my sin. But You didn't stop there. You also gave me the gift of your own Spirit. When I feel unworthy, remind me of the lengths to which You have gone to in order to adopt me. Amen."

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two

8. What is your personal baptism story? Were you baptized as a child or when you were older? Who was there? How important an event was this in the story of your life? When you tell the story, do you talk about being "put to death" in your baptism?
9. Read Colossians 2:11-15, especially verse 12. How is this language different from the way we usually talk about baptism?
10. Christians often talk about how Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross saved us from sin and death. But what role does baptism play as part of Jesus' miraculous salvation?
11. Scripture gives us two powerful images to help us understand the miraculous importance of baptism in our own

personal salvation story. Read the first one: 1 Peter 3:18-21. To what famous story does Peter liken our baptism?

12. Now read 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. What significant event does Paul use to describe baptism?
13. What is the common thread between these stories? What action did God perform for Noah's family and the Israelites that He now performs for us in baptism?
14. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, use these words as your prayer: "God, sometimes I feel like You are very far away from me. Help me to remember that, through my baptism, You drew close to me. You are here every single day for me, and You are never far from me. Thank You for being with me every moment of every day. Amen."

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three

15. What does baptism do for you? What special benefits or powers does it impart? We've talked in the last two days about how baptism makes us part of God's family and rescues us. Now let's look at the specific benefits of baptism.
16. What does baptism accomplish regarding our sinful nature? (See Acts 2:38 and 22:16)
17. From what two negative things does baptism rescue us? (See Romans 6:3, 5 and Colossians 1:13-14)
18. What promised reward does baptism bring us? (See Mark 16:16 and John 3:5)
19. Through baptism, the Holy Spirit enters our heart and begins to create his qualities within us. Look at Galatians 5:22-23. What are the positive attributes of a Spirit-filled person?
20. What is one conscious choice you can make to embody one of these fruits of the Spirit throughout your day today?
21. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, use these words as your prayer: "God, sometimes I take You and Your gifts for granted. Earthly gifts fade away over time, but Your gifts are not like that. Your Spirit lives inside my heart and gives me gifts constantly! I praise You for giving me the peace, wisdom, joy and discernment that I need to honor you every day. Amen."

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four

22. Some Christian traditions teach that baptism is largely a symbol. It commemorates what God does in our hearts, but doesn't actually have any supernatural power. Do you agree or disagree with this position? Why?

23. Read Titus 3:5-8. This passage says that Christ saved us through what particular means?
24. Now read Ephesians 5:25b-26. Christ gave himself for us on the cross, but how does he actually clean us, his church?
25. Read Galatians 3:26-27. What act unifies us with Christ?
26. How necessary is baptism in a believer's life if it is merely a symbol? How necessary is baptism if it's a miraculous work of the power of God in our lives?
27. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, use these words as your prayer: "God, relationship is never just a one-way street. Whenever You give us a gift, the purpose is to draw us into a deeper relationship with You. The same is true for baptism, which opens the door for us to experience a dynamic relationship with You. Help us to sense Your presence and to call on you for help in our everyday lives. Amen."

Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five

28. Every Christian believer is engaged in a spiritual battle. Do you think this battle is primarily external or internal? Why?
29. What role might baptism play in spiritual warfare?
30. While there is an external spiritual battle that is important (Eph. 6:12), baptism equips us to fight an internal spiritual battle. Read Ephesians 4:21-24. What two forces are at work inside us?
31. What are some daily examples where you see that internal struggle play out in your life? (For me, it's when the alarm clock goes off or when I see that we're down to one cookie in the company break room.)
32. The good news is that we have a "ringer" on our side in this spiritual battle! Spend a few minutes looking up John 14:16, Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Who fights within us to give us the power to be holier?
33. How does it change your spiritual struggle if you can clearly identify the combatants: your new self, powered by the Holy Spirit; and your old self, powered by sinful desires?
34. Martin Luther recommends that we use our morning shower to remind ourselves of our baptism that equips us for our daily struggle against our old, sinful self. Today, choose one of the verses in this study (or find another Bible verse about your baptism), write it on an index card, put it inside a Ziploc bag, and post it in your shower to encourage you in the mornings.

35. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, use these words as your prayer:” God, it's amazing to think that You love me. But You love differently than the world loves. You do not love in a greedy or selfish way. You love in a pure and selfless way. You sent Jesus to rescue me and your Spirit to stay with me. And at any given moment, you are fighting for me. Thank you, God, for leaving no stone unturned. You care for me in the most thorough and complete way. I want to live my life in response to that, holding nothing back from you. I love you, Lord! Amen.”