

Establish
Session 5

Believers Baptism

Updated: 10/24/09

Believer's Baptism

Today we are going to talk about another important provision that God has given us during the beginning of our walk with Him ... believer's baptism.

But it is also one of the areas where different Christian groups differ from each other.

We're going to set forth the understanding that the Lord has given us ... you don't have to agree with us. We just want you to look at what the scriptures have to say. Then you can adopt the understanding which you feel is best for you.

Our definition of new testament baptism ...

"Baptism is the immersion or dipping of a candidate in water on profession of faith in Christ."

Who are the proper subjects of baptism?

"Confessed Christians who have experienced the New Birth and thus have been brought by the Holy Spirit into the eternal family of God."

**“BELIEVER’S BAPTISM”
A Declaration of Freedom**

NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM

Baptism is the immersion or dipping of a candidate in water on profession of faith in Christ.

PROPER SUBJECTS FOR BAPTISM

Confessed Christians who have experienced the New Birth and thus have been brought by the Holy Spirit into the eternal family of God.

1. BAPTISM INVOLVES OBEDIENCE

1. It obeys the command of Jesus Matthew 28:19

“Go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

2. It follows the Example of Christ

When Jesus knew that the Pharisees had heard about the greater crowds coming to Him than to John to be baptized and to become His disciples — (though Jesus Himself didn’t baptize them, but his disciples did) — John 4:1-2 (See also Matthew 3:13-15)

3. It follows the example of the Apostles

*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. – Acts 2:38
They believed Philip’s message that Jesus was the Messiah...and many men and women were baptized. - Acts 8:12*

4. It is an outward sign of a change of heart and a new allegiance

It is like a:

- Soldier putting on his uniform
- public marriage Ceremony

Baptism involves obedience.

- It is not an option. It is an essential part of obedience to scripture and to the Lord Jesus Himself. To refuse to obey this instruction is to live in disobedience to the revealed word of God.

1. It obeys the command of **JESUS** in Matt. 28:19

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- Especially in non-Christian countries, baptism is a life-changing step, a turning point for new believers. It’s okay to come for instruction, gather for worship, etc., but when a person is baptized, it’s like they are crossing a dividing line – leaving their ancestral beliefs and traditions – and they are going a different direction.
- And so, people are often persecuted and even disowned by family when they decide to be baptized.
- When the Romans invaded England, the troops crossed the channel in their ships. As they disembarked onto land and began to make their way toward their encampment, they looked over their shoulders and saw, with horror, that their ships were burning. They had been set on fire by the commanding general. He wanted them to know that they either completed this campaign successfully, or there was no way back.
- It’s almost like that with baptism. Paul said in Corinthians that the children of Israel were baptized into the Red Sea. Now they couldn’t go back if they wanted to; they had to go on into a new life.
- That’s how Jesus envisioned it. An end to our old life and the beginning of our new life.

2. New testament baptism follows the **EXAMPLE** of Christ.

- Jesus launched His public ministry when He was baptized.
- This was not just a symbol. He did Himself what He was going to ask His followers to do.
- In John 4:1,2 we read that Jesus gained and baptized even more disciples among the Jewish people than John the Baptist.

3. It also follows the example of the **APOSTLES** .

- After His death, resurrection and ascension, we come to Acts 2 ...

Peter said to them “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”—Acts 2:38

- Up in Samaria later on ...

But when they believed Philip as he preached...the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.—Acts 8:12

4. It is an outward sign of our change of heart and new commitment to follow Jesus

- It's like a soldier **PUTTING ON HIS UNIFORM.**

- It's one of the first things you do after you are enrolled
- It identifies you as a member of the armed forces
- You are now expected to conduct yourself in a certain manner, so as to give a good representation of the unit who's uniform you are wearing

- It's like a **PUBLIC MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

- Two people bring their lives together in marriage. Hopefully they have already been joined together in their heart.
- By their promise and under the authority of the state, they are joined together.
- If she is faithful, she will bring honor to her husband and to their marriage.
- If she is unfaithful, she will bring dishonor.
- So it is with a Christian who is publicly joined by baptism to his Lord

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It is like a:

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However, although the public declaration of our faith in Christ is an important reason for Believer's Baptism, there is even more here than a public witness. There is a work!

So, we are going to attempt to see in the scriptures just why baptism is so important in the life of the believer.

II. Baptism declares and celebrates our Deliverance!

"For the power of the life-giving Spirit...has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death." Rom. 8:2

- We all understand that vicious circle of sin and death.
- Now the Lord wants to break into that old pattern, shatter it into pieces so that it doesn't dominate anymore, break it's capacity to control us.
- Baptism is part of the provision He has made for us so that we can be free to live our new life in Him. This is something He wants to impart to us. We can receive and appropriate it.

So let us see that, in baptism, there are several things that we do:

1. We take Authority over the power and domination of sin. The Bible says that, "sin's power over us was broken".

"So, dear brothers, you have no obligation whatever to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do...if through the power of the Holy Spirit you crush it and its evil deeds." Romans 8:12-13 (L.B.)

- There is lingering power that the enemy has established in our lives and it needs to be broken.

II. BAPTISM DECLARES OUR DELIVERANCE

“For the power of the life-giving Spirit...has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death. God sent His own Son in a human body, like ours — except that ours are sinful—and destroyed sin’s control over us by giving Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. So now we can obey God’s laws, if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us.”

“So, dear brothers, you have no obligation whatever to your old sinful nature to do what it begs you to do... if through the power of the Holy Spirit you crush it and its evil deeds.” Romans 8:2-4, 12-13(L.B.)

Baptism is part of the provision Christ made for our life in Him. All that Christ’s death and resurrection accomplished for us is conveyed and made real in Believer’s Baptism. We believe Him to set us free from all that would bind and hinder, drag us down and hold us back as we seek to move on into the Full Life Christ has for us.

Therefore, in Believer’s Baptism, we:

1. TAKE AUTHORITY — over the domination and power of sin.

“Sin’s power over us was broken when we became Christians and were baptized to become part of Jesus Christ. Through His death the power of your sinful nature was shattered.” Romans 6:3 (L.B.)

See also — Romans 6:5-7 and 11

V. 5 **We died with Jesus**

For you have become a part of Him, so you died with Him, so to speak, when he died.

V. 6 **Our old desires are nailed to the cross**

Your old evil desires were nailed to the cross with Him.

V. 7 **Sin has no more authority**

...your sin-loving body is no longer under sin’s control, no longer needs to be a slave to sin; For when you are deadened to sin you are freed from all its allure and its power over you.

V. 11 **Dead to sin and alive to God**

So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin, and instead be alive to God, alert to Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Romans 6 is a key passage for our understanding about baptism. In it, Paul sets forth several things that happened when Jesus died on the cross.
 - Verse 5 – **WE DIED WITH JESUS**
 - He is our substitute ... we died when He died.
 - Verse 6 – **OUR OLD DESIRES WERE NAILED TO THE CROSS**
 - One minute we were under sin's control, the next minute the price has been paid – Jesus has paid it.
 - *"... our old man was crucified with Him."*
 - Verse 7 – **SIN HAS NO MORE AUTHORITY**
 - Sin is now the intruder. This we claim in baptism! Then we can look sin in the face and say, "You no longer have any authority over me." We are dead to sin.
 - It's not that we will be free from any problems or temptations, but when they come, we can say, "you have no right here! I reject you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!"
 - Verse 11 – **DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE TO GOD**
 - We can "reckon ourselves dead to sin" and "alive unto God". We no longer need to respond to signals from sin. Now we can respond to the signals from God!
 - The control factor is broken.

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So look upon your old sin nature as dead and unresponsive to sin, and instead be alive to God, alert to Him, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- So, as you are baptized into His death, you are set free from the **AUTHORITY** and **POWER** of sin. This can be made real to us in baptism as by faith we grab hold of it!
 - Many of us have tried to conquer areas in our life, but then we fail.
 - Some of us have fasted or have had people pray for us, rebuke the devil, but we still can't get control over these things.
 - But when we are baptized into Jesus we can be set free. He came to destroy the power of him who brings death and bondage.

Cut Off

Paul compares and equates Old Testament Circumcision with New Testament Baptism in his letter to the Colossians.

"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Col. 2:11

or from the Living Bible

"When you came to Christ, He set you free from your evil desires, not by a bodily operation or circumcision, but by a spiritual operation, the baptism of your souls." Col. 2:11 (Living Bible)

- God had made wonderful promises to Abraham (descendants beyond the number of the sand or the stars, all nations would be blessed, the Savior would come from his loins).
- God entered into a covenant with Abraham. In doing so, Abraham also had a part to play (Read Genesis 17:9-12 from the Living Bible). Abraham and all his descendants were to be circumcised, for circumcision was to be the sign & seal of the Old Covenant with God.
- What was the purpose of circumcision? It was **THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT MADE BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE**
- Many times throughout the Old Testament, the people didn't take God's instruction to Abraham seriously. They let it lapse. This was a serious matter to God. He looked at it as a sign, a symbol the these people had given themselves to Him. So, he had to deal with them:
 - Moses and Zipporah
 - Joshua ... not to set foot, any of you, into the land of promise until they were all circumcised. So Joshua stopped right there and circumcised all of them.

So, as you are baptized into His death, you are set free from the

Authority and power of sin

2. **CUT OFF** — the past life through a spiritual circumcision performed on your hearts by the holy Spirit.

When you came to Christ, He set you free from your evil desires, not by a bodily operation or circumcision, but by a spiritual operation, the baptism of your souls. — Colossians 2:11 (L.B.)

As circumcision was the seal of the Old Covenant, so now baptism becomes the sign of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. It fulfills the meaning of circumcision.

— What was the purpose of circumcision? Genesis 17:9-11(L.B.)

The sign of a Covenant made

between God and His people

— What spiritual work was circumcision to accomplish?

To cleanse their hearts so they can love God

The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. — Deuteronomy 30:6 (NIV) See also Jeremiah 17:1 & 31:31-33

— Who is a true Child of God?

Not one who is only outwardly affected,

but rather one who has been inwardly

changed by the circumcision of their heart

For you are not real Jews just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish initiation ceremony of circumcision.

No, a real Jew is anyone whose heart is right with God. For God is not looking for those who cut their bodies in actual body circumcision, but He is looking for those with changed hearts and minds. Whoever has that kind of change in his life will get his praise from God, even if not from you. — Roman 2:28-29.

- Unfortunately, even when they did circumcise their children, it became viewed as an outward symbol. God never viewed it merely as such. His intention was to accomplish a spiritual work in their hearts. In Deut. 30:6 (read) we understand that circumcision was **TO CLEANSE THEIR HEARTS SO THEY CAN LOVE GOD**
- Until the heart is cleansed, they wouldn't be able to walk in even the first of God's commandments! God said, "I have to do something in your hearts first. Then you will be tender towards Me and will be able to love, obey and follow Me.

So, Circumcision was not just to be a tradition, but it was the sign that their hearts were right! This is really evident in the prophets:

- Jeremiah 17:11 ... *"My people sin as though commanded to, as if their evil were chiseled with an iron pen or diamond point upon their stoney hearts."*
- God was testifying about them ... "You're immovable! Your hearts are so hard it seems as if your evil desires are chiseled of stone."
- But God gives the answer through the prophet Jeremiah:

"And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live!"
Jer. 31:31-33
- God was saying, "You weren't able to obey My commandments and follow after Me, but I'm going to come and do a new thing! The day will come when I am going to circumcise your hearts and write my laws into your hearts."

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- That's what Circumcision really means ... and we find this true when we come to Romans 2:28-29

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men but from God.”

- Many Jews considered circumcision as a sign of their ethnicity. As long as they were circumcised, they were “children of Abraham”. Many people think the same way about baptism. They think that as long as they were baptized, perhaps even as a baby, they are a “child of God”. Romans 2:28 was a slap in the face of those Jews. Paul declared that the true Jew is the one who inwardly changed because he has been circumcised in his heart.
- Who, then, is a real child of God? **NOT ONE WHO IS ONLY OUTWARDLY AFFECTED, BUT RATHER ONE WHO HAS BEEN INWARDLY CHANGED BY THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART!**

So, as you are baptized into His death, you are set free from the

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What is the spiritual operation on our hearts supposed to remove? There are two things that God wants to cut away as He circumcises our hearts:

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.”

○ **HOSTILITY TO GOD AND HIS WAYS – THE OLD SINFUL NATURE**

- *“... the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can do so. Rom. 8:7 NIV*
 - From the time we were born we were hostile to God’s ways. No one had to teach us to sin.
 - We grow up hostile to God. But God wants to take the fight out of us, to break the back of this hostility. This we can accept from Him in baptism.
- God also wants to remove **IT’S LINGERING EFFECTS** which remain after all these many years when “I” was on the throne and my sinful nature was in control. These are all parts of the legacy of our sinful past.
- The habits, desires, patterns, goals and motivations
 - Any past experiences that control our behavior – hurts, fears, resentments
...
 - All this He wants to release us from as we enter into baptism
- True circumcission is that inward work of the Spirit of God whereby He cuts away the effects of the old nature and sets us free to live according to the new nature given to us by Christ.
- Example of planting a tomato plant in the spring right in a weed patch
- If I say, “grow, tomato, grow, ...”, I’m foolish. It’s going to struggle all of it’s life because of the weed’s in which it is growing.
 - But if I remove the weeds from the ground and then plant the tomato, then I can expect the plant to bear good fruit, not to struggle.
 - Some weeds will come, but they can be dealt with. The “established weeds” have been cut out of the way providing this new life with a good start.
 - In Baptism, Jesus is weeding the patch - all kinds of troubles, bondages, habits, desires, hurts, hang-ups, memories which have roots in the past life and lie buried in the deep subconscious and from there, affect our behavior today.

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— What is the spiritual operation on our hearts supposed to remove?

“In Him you were also circumcised, in putting off the old sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.” Colossians 2:11 (NIV)

1. **Hostility – The old sinful nature,**

...the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so — Romans 8:7 NIV

2. and **its lingering effects**

habits
desires
patterns
goals and motivations
past experiences which control our behaviour
hurts, fears, resentments, etc.

Illustration: Weeding the patch

True circumcision is that inward work of the Spirit of God whereby He cuts away the effects of the old nature and sets us free to live according to the new nature given to us by Christ.

3. BURY — The old life and rise to live a new life in Christ

“Your old sin-loving nature was buried with Him by baptism, when He died, and when the Father, with glorious power, brought Him back to life again, you were given this wonderful new life to enjoy.” Romans 6:4 (L.B.)

— Baptism is a **Burial Ground**

Illustration: Drown the Devil

— The manifestations of the old life need to be cut loose within the depths of our heart and buried. A death and resurrection takes place. God changes our nature: from Adam’s to Christ’s, from hostility and rebellion to submission and faith.

3. Bury the old life and rise to live a new life in Christ.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.—Romans 6:4 (L.B.)

- Baptism is a **BURIAL GROUND**
 - Pastor conducting a Pastor’s Class ... children wrote down what they considered to take place in baptism ... one child wrote ... “in baptism we drown the devil.”
 - That’s what God does with our sins! “As far as the east is from the west ...” He “buries them in the depths of the sea.” We receive all of this when we are baptized.
 - Carlos Ortiz, Argentine pastor (the Latinos are often quite dramatic)... so as he lowered the candidate into the water, he cried, “I kill you in the name of the Lord, and I declare you raised up with Jesus Christ to new Life in Him!”
 - By faith they accept the death of the old life and the resurrection of the new life in Christ.
 - The manifestations of the old life need to be cut loose within the depths of our heart and buried. A death and resurrection takes place. God changes the bent and direction of our nature: from Adams to Christ's, from hostility and rebellion to submission and faith.

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All Of This We Receive By Faith

“... buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead.” Col. 2:12 (LB)

- Faith is the hand that reaches out to receive all that God has for us. Each step we take, each request we make, each benefit we receive only will become active in our lives as we receive them and they become real in our experience through the hand of faith.

- A person can go through the form of baptism and it can mean absolutely nothing.
 - What if I fell into the baptism pool? Will I be baptized?” No, I’d just get wet because there is much more here than just getting into the water.

 - Illustration: Rs. 100 Note
 - There is an intrinsic (physical) value and an official value to this Rs. 100 note that I hold in my hand. The physical value is just a couple of rupees for the paper, ink, etc. But the official value is established by the Indian government. The government says this little piece of paper with some writing and ink on it is worth Rs. 100. So I can take this note to the store and use it for its official value.

 - So it is with baptism. The water and ceremony mean very little. But when the symbol of baptism is backed up by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is great value to the person who accepts this by faith. They have passed from death onto life. The old is buried and they are raised in newness of life.

ALL THIS WE RECEIVE BY FAITH

...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead. — Colossians 2:12 (L.B.)

As is true with all God's gracious work in our lives, this preparation of our hearts to walk in Christ's ways must be received by faith and quickened to us by the Holy Spirit if it is to be effective. A person can go through the form of Baptism and it can mean absolutely nothing.

Illustration: "Two values to the 100 Rupee bill"

— intrinsic

— official

Therefore, Baptism is no longer a **Spectator Sport**

III. BAPTISM INVOLVES IMMERSION

1. The Greek word "**Baptiso**" means:

"to immerse, to dip or plunge beneath"

2. New Testament accounts give the impression of immersion.

Mark 1:5 and 9: "**IN**" the river Jordan...

John 3:23: There was "**much**" water there...

Acts 8:38-39: "**Down**" into the water... "**Up**" out of the water...

3. Immersion is the "perfect symbol." No other form portrays so well the significance of the experience as it is set forth in Scripture.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, Certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. —Romans 6:4-5(NIV)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Everything God has for us is a growing experience.

Those who have been baptized earlier in their life do not need to repudiate the tradition out of which they come. They can appreciate whatever work of God which was accomplished in them or for them at that time.

Should they seek baptism by immersion now as an adult they are not taking away from the past, but simply adding to it. They are celebrating God's continuing work in their life.

Therefore, baptism is no longer a **SPECTATOR SPORT**

- When there is prayer for healing in one of our services, we don't just stand and watch, or even listen, but we are all praying together - joining our faith ... "Yes Lord, touch this body, release your healing upon them in Jesus' name."

- In a similar way, we all participate in the occasion of baptism. We are there to support this brother or sister who is being baptized, to support them with our faith, and claim that the Lord will accomplish all that He intends to do through this baptism. We are exercising our faith. "Yes, Lord, do something here! We believe You to cleanse this person and to break all the bondage from the past as you circumcise their heart and set them free to ove and serve You.

- So, on the authority of God's word and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the pastor declares the person being baptized to be free from all past bondage. He accepts the operation of the Holy Spirit to circumcise their heart. In the name of Jesus he declares it.

- This is why we don't do private baptisms ... it's a public function of the Body of Christ.

- Baptism is, therefore, one of the beginning steps in the life of a Christian which helps set them free to live the life to which Jesus is calling them.

ALL THIS WE RECEIVE BY FAITH

...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead. — Colossians 2:12 (L.B.)

As is true with all God's gracious work in our lives, this preparation of our hearts to walk in Christ's ways must be received by faith and quickened to us by the Holy Spirit if it is to be effective. A person can go through the form of Baptism and it can mean absolutely nothing.

Illustration: "Two values to the 100 Rupee bill"

— intrinsic

— official

Therefore, Baptism is no longer a **Spectator Sport**

III. BAPTISM INVOLVES IMMERSION

1. The Greek word "**Baptiso**" means:

"to immerse, to dip or plunge beneath"

2. New Testament accounts give the impression of immersion.

Mark 1:5 and 9: "**IN**" the river Jordan...

John 3:23: There was "**much**" water there...

Acts 8:38-39: "**Down**" into the water... "**Up**" out of the water...

3. Immersion is the "perfect symbol." No other form portrays so well the significance of the experience as it is set forth in Scripture.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, Certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection. —Romans 6:4-5(NIV)

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III. Baptism Involves Immersion

1. The Greek word **BAPTISO** means “to immerse, to dip, to plunge beneath.”
2. The New Testament gives the impression that those being baptized were being immersed ... (see the scriptures in the students manual)
3. Whereas some traditions baptize by “sprinkling” or “pouring” we believe that immersion is the perfect symbol for what we have been saying takes place in baptism – our identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus. No other form portrays so well the significance of the experience as it is set forth in Scripture.
 - Let’s take Romans 6:4-5 and compare the various forms of baptism in light of these verses which declare us to be buried with Him through baptism into death.
 - We were buried with Him through “sprinkling” into death and resurrection
 - We were buried with Him through “pouring” into death and resurrection
 - We were buried with Him through “immersion” into death and resurrection

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Concluding thoughts.

Everything God has for us is a growing experience. We saw how conversion is a process that brings complete salvation to our lives and how that conversion needs to be updated to what is going on in our life now. The same may be true with baptism.

All who have not yet followed the Lord in New Testament baptism need to do so soon.

Some of you may want to renew your baptism again with new faith because you understand more of what the scriptures say about the deliverance you can claim as you are baptized.

Others will rejoice in the experience of baptism which they already have had and thank the Lord for it.

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GROW IN THE NEW LIFE

The first time a baby uses a spoon he may get more food outside his mouth than inside. Why? Because he has not had practice in using a spoon. But “practice makes perfect,” and it will not be very long before the child can use the spoon well. In fact, he will become so skillful in using a spoon that it will become a habit.

This is what practice does. Constant practice makes an act become a habit or an integral part of your life. When you receive Christ, you are as a baby born into God’s family. Some Christian habits must be acquired. You must practice these suggested duties faithfully so that they become a part of your Christian Life

PRAY EVERY DAY

What would a father think if his son should go all day long without saying a word to him, either in the morning, at meals, in the evening, or when he went to bed? What does our heavenly Father think of us if we go through the day without talking with Him in prayer? Prayer is simply conversation with God. When we pray, we talk to God and we listen quietly to hear what He says to us. We must pray if we are to grow as Christians. We “ought always to pray” (Luke 18:1).

Some time each day should be set apart for the purpose of praying. It is wise to spend a few minutes in prayer in the morning, just after you awaken. Begin the day with God, asking His blessing and guidance. Take time at night before you retire to thank God for His help. Confess to Him your sins and receive His forgiveness. Give yourself to Him anew. Pray for others. Thus you begin and end the day with God. Of course, anywhere and at any time during the day you can thank God for His love and for the helpfulness of His presence. No one is too busy to be aware of God’s nearness and to have fellowship each day with his heavenly Father. Will you make this a daily habit?

READ THE BIBLE EVERY DAY

We desire not only to talk to God but that He talk to us, telling us which way to go and what to do. God can speak to us through the Bible. It is our road map through life. Travelers who decide they will not be bothered by a road map can blame no one but themselves if they get lost. Many Christians lose their way in the Christian life because they do not read the Bible.

The best way to be faithful in Bible reading is to have your Bible in the room where you pray. Read it before or after prayer. Thus you hold a two-way conversation with God. You talk to Him in prayer and He talks to you as you read the Bible and think quietly about Him and His Word.

The Bible is the most valuable book ever written and can become the most interesting to you. But do not start with Genesis. As a suggestion, begin with the story of the Savior as found in the Gospel of Mark. Then read the wonderful Gospel of John. Follow this with the Acts of the Apostles in order to see how the first Christians lived. The Psalms will deepen your spiritual life. Philippians will make you thankful. Romans will instruct you in the great teachings of the Christian faith. First John describes the marks of a true Christian. The Gospel of Luke has been

called the “most beautiful book ever written.” Hebrews shows how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the Christian message. The Gospel of Matthew, particularly, tells how Jesus’ life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. After reading the New Testament, you will find the Old Testament fulfilled in the Christian message. The Gospel of Matthew, particularly, tells how Jesus’ life fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. After reading the New Testament, you will find the Old Testament stories of great help. Sometimes you may want to read two or three chapters at a time. Other times you may spend all your moments and thoughts on just a verse or section. Read until God gives you a message for the day. Remember the statement of the psalmist, “I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). Will you make this one of your daily habits?

GO TO CHURCH REGULARLY

You receive little help and encouragement in the Christian life if you are not active in a church body. Fellowship, group worship, prayer and study are not often experienced by those absent from the various church gatherings. Just as an ember that is separated from the fire soon dies, so will a Christian lose his spiritual glow and joy if he fails to attend regularly. The growing, active Christian is one who participates fully in the life of the church and who shares unselfishly in its work. The Bible warns us about “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some” (Hebrews 10:25). Your fellowship provides several different types of services each week. Try to be present at all of them. As a Christian, you need encouragement in worship, study, service, and you should plan to take advantage of all these opportunities for Christian growth. Will you do this?

GIVE REGULARLY TO THE LORD

That the world and everything in it belongs not to people, but to God who created all things is very easy to forget. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). God is the owner of all you possess. Even the money you earn does not belong to you. It is a trust from God. You earn money by the abilities God has given you, by making use of the natural resources of the earth — land, minerals, water, vegetation, electricity — all products of God’s creation.

Stewardship means that a Christian realizes that he is accountable to God for the way in which he uses his life, health, body, talents, time and money. The first step to be taken is to give oneself to God. Christians who do not support the Lord’s work financially as they should must face this truth: They have not yet given themselves to God. When we have surrendered our lives to Him, then we shall give our money joyously to His work. This is the test. Do you really enjoy giving generously to God’s work?

Our heavenly Father knows our needs. He also knows that multitudes of people worry too much about what they have and what they do not have. Some people never give to God’s work because of selfish or unsatisfied desires. Jesus urged His followers not to be too concerned about food and clothing but rather to be concerned about doing God’s will (Matthew 6:31-33).

Every committed disciple desires to give to the Lord's work. The Bible suggests a minimum amount — a tenth. In the Old Testament the giving of a tithe (a tenth) of one's income to God's work was a part of the law (Malachi 3:10). In the New Testament, believers are urged to give regularly and proportionately (I Corinthians 16:2). If the Old Testament believers gave a tenth, surely we, who live not under the law but under the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, cannot do less. Persons who regularly give a tenth of their income to God's work never regret it.

WITNESS FOR CHRIST FAITHFULLY

Jesus said to all His followers, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). You were led to Christ because someone told you about Him and His love. Now it is your turn: Will you tell others, that they also may experience the joy of belonging to Jesus?

In John 1:35-36 we read that John the Baptist directed two of his disciples to Jesus. Both of them became His followers. One of these, Andrew, went immediately to find his brother so he could tell him about the Savior. Similarly, Philip, when he became a Christian, told Nathaniel, who also became a follower of Christ.

Do not make the matter of witnessing a difficult one. Tell others what Jesus has done for you and what He means to you. Share with them how they can learn about Christ and experience His love. Invite them to worship with you or to talk with your pastor.

Witnessing involves more than just speaking to others about Christ. By the acts of service which you do at home, at work, and in the community, you back up your witness for Christ. Your genuine love toward all people regardless of their race, cultural background, or religious beliefs; your honesty and faithfulness in your tasks; your concern for the less fortunate and your efforts to alleviate their needs — all reveal that Christ lives within you. Ask the leaders of your fellowship if there is a definite task that you can do, and then perform it faithfully. A deed of kindness, a word of cheer, a quiet helpful act—in all these ways you can be Christ's witness.

You must constantly live as a loyal follower of Jesus Christ, remembering also to speak to your friends about Him whenever you have an opportunity to do so.

FULL LIFE IN CHRIST, Group Facilitator Suggestions
ESTABLISH : Building the Foundation, Session 5

FIRST

- = Quickly go over questions 1 and 2 from question sheet #4.
- Then let them each share their response to question #6. Discuss together any questions which are raised in their response.

NOW

- Indicate you have some questions for them:

Ask them to write their response to the following questions in the margin or on a separate piece of paper. Make sure each one has a pencil.

- a. What does the act of being immersed in water picture to you?
- b. What does the phrase “believer’s baptism” signify to you?
- c. What questions do you have about baptism?

NEXT

Let them share the responses which they have written to the above questions. Deal with each question separately, one at a time.

FINALLY

Discuss with them the “circumcision of the heart” where by we trust the Lord to “cut away” the lingering effects of the old life in baptism. Make sure they understand how we can “take authority over” and believe the Lord to “set us free from” the old life in baptism.

FOR THE NEXT TIME

- Ask them to be sure and complete the Question Sheet for Session 5
- Read the pamphlet “Grow in the New Life” in preparation for the next session.