

Leader guide

In this lesson:

SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:41

CORE BELIEF

Jesus Christ

TAKE HOME TRUTH

Baptism pictures, promotes, and preserves the gospel by publicly identifying Christ's people with God and one another, marking us as distinct from the world.

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Identifying with Jesus: Baptism



OVERVIEW OF THIS LESSON

This week we begin a two-week series on the ordinances of the church—baptism and the Lord's Supper. Over the centuries of church history, there have been many different interpretations and beliefs concerning these two practices. The purpose of this series is to bring clarity to the church ordinances and help our church understand what we, at First Family, believe about baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This week, we will examine the topic of baptism.

NOTE TO LEADERS: The purpose of this week's group lesson is to provide concise answers to common questions about baptism. You have a lot of flexibility in how you lead this lesson. If members of your group have

questions about baptism, then you will have the ammunition to answer them. (At least most of them.) If you don't know the answer to a question, don't hesitate to let your group know this and shoot me an email and I will get an answer for you to send out to your group.

Also, it is possible your group members will not have a lot of questions after they hear the sermon. Be prepared to branch off into some related discussion. A good alternative would be to ask some folks in your group to share their salvation and baptism testimony. To prime the pump, I would be prepared to go first. Each one of us should be able to share a short testimony (3-5 minutes) of how God saved us. To tie this in with baptism, ask them to share their baptism testimony along with their salvation testimony. To be even more proactive, ask 1 or 2 other folks from your group ahead of time if they will share their testimony.

A few months ago, we started taking a few minutes of every staff meeting for one of our staff members to share their testimony. It has been a blessing to hear how God has worked in the lives of the men and women who work at First Family. Not only is it encouraging spiritually, but it has helped us get to know one another on a more in-depth, personal level.

MEMORY VERSE

Acts 2:41—So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

CORE BELIEF

Jesus Christ (John 1:12): We believe in Jesus Christ, His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious death, burial and bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His personal future return in power and glory. We are significant only because of our position as children of God.

INTRODUCTION

Make sure you ask this question this week. It gives people the opportunity to discuss questions or issues that come up beyond the written questions. People's responses can often lead into one of the questions in the "Digging Deeper" section. Also, some weeks this question will result in a lot of discussion, other weeks, not so much.

Can you share your salvation testimony? Every believer should be able to tell someone else about how the Lord saved them. Your testimony doesn't need to be flowery or dramatic—it's simply your story of how God worked in your life.

Looking back at your notes from this week's sermon, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

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DIGGING DEEPER

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In this section, feel free to develop your own questions to help guide your group's discussion. Below are some suggestions. Remember, if you are hearing from everyone in your group, chances are you won't have to time to discuss every question. You may start with one that catches your attention so you don't run out of time. For example, it's not odd to start with Question #6, then go to Question #5 and if you have time come back to Question #4.

What is the difference between a sacrament and an ordinance?

Many believer baptists reject sacrament in favor of another term, ordinance. Sacrament, they claim, carries the "magical" understanding of medieval Catholic theology, in which the rites of the church were supposed to infuse divine grace into the recipient. Ordinance avoids this danger. The term is derived from ordain, suggesting that these rites are ordained or commanded by Jesus. Participation in them, therefore, symbolizes the obedience of the disciple to the Lord and corresponds to the personal and voluntary character of the sacred practices emphasized by believer's baptists. [Reid, Daniel G., Robert Dean Linder, Bruce L. Shelley, and Harry S. Stout. Dictionary of Christianity in America. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990.]

Most Protestants adhere to two ordinances of the church: The Lord's Supper, and water baptism. At First Family, we observe the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper because they were commanded to be observed by our Lord while He was here on the earth, Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–26.

Roman Catholics teach and observe seven sacraments that were decreed at The Council of Trent in 1549. Belief in these sacraments is considered to be an article of faith, something Catholics must observe. The seven sacraments are:

- *Baptism*
- *Confirmation*
- *The Mass (the Eucharist)*
- *Penance*
- *Extreme Unction*
- *Holy Matrimony*
- *Holy Orders*

Roy Gingrich explains how sacraments function within the Catholic belief system:

The Roman Catholic church teaches that the blessings of God are directly bestowed through the administration, of the sacraments. They teach that the disease is sin, the doctor is God, the pharmacy is the Roman Catholic church, the nurse is the priest, the bottle is the sacraments, and the medicine is the gifts of God. This church teaches that the ordinances are not symbols of blessing already received but are the vehicles or channels through which these blessings are bestowed. [Gingrich, Roy E. *Four Controversial Doctrines*. Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2003.]

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What is the origin of the Christian belief in baptism?

John Piper provides a simple overview of the Christian belief in Baptism:

Just before Jesus came on the scene "preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel," (Mark 1:14, 15), another man, John the Baptist, had been preparing the people of Israel by calling them to repent, turn to God in faith and obedience, and be baptized. What did the baptism of John mean?

It meant that the Messiah has arrived; he will be gathering a new people for himself; the mark of this new people is not Jewishness but repentance and faith. Therefore Jews should not say to John's demand for repentance: "But we have Abraham as our father, and we bear the marks of circumcision, the sign of the covenant." What counts in the new people is not who your parents are but whom you live for; and therefore a new symbol for the new covenant people is given, baptism; and it is given in John's ministry only to those who repent and believe. In other words, by calling all Jews to be baptized, John declared powerfully that physical descent does not make one part of God's family, and therefore circumcision which signified a physical relationship will now be replaced by baptism which signifies spiritual relationship. And so John the Baptist lays the foundation for the New Testament understanding of baptism, which we in the Baptist tradition today try to preserve.

Jesus himself accepted baptism from John in order to identify himself with John's teaching and with this new people of faith. Jesus' disciples picked up John's practice and baptized as a part of Jesus' ministry (John 3:26; 4:2). Then at the end of his

earthly ministry Jesus commissioned the church to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Several weeks later the apostles preached their first sermon to the Jewish people gathered for Pentecost in Jerusalem. Peter closed with these words: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." Following in the footsteps of John the Baptist and in obedience to their Lord's command, the apostles call the nation of Israel to repent and to signify that repentance through baptism. And the promise that they hold out is not merely for this generation, but for their children also, and not only for those near, but those who are far away. It is for everyone who hears and responds to the call of God. Forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit is offered to all who turn to follow Christ and go on to express that transformation in baptism.

So we can see how the ordinance of Christian baptism began with John the Baptist, was accepted by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, was practiced by his disciples, was commanded by the Lord after his resurrection, and was offered in the early church to all who would repent and believe in Jesus Christ. And we can see the meaning it attained. It was a sign of repentance and faith in Christ as the Savior and Lord of a new people. Baptism symbolizes conversion to Jesus. It represents a turning from the old life and an alignment of ourselves with Christ. As St. Paul put it, "We are buried with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). It symbolizes death to the old, unbelieving way and the coming alive of a new person who trusts and obeys Jesus.

What are the different views on baptism?

NOTE: The following definitions are taken from Christian Theology by Millard J. Erickson.

Lutheran/Catholic View: *Baptism, according to the sacramentalists, is a means by which God imparts saving grace; it results in the remission of sins. By either awakening or strengthening faith, baptism effects the washing of regeneration. In the Lutheran*

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understanding, the sacrament is ineffectual unless faith is already present. In this respect, the Lutheran position differs from the Catholic position, which holds that baptism confers grace ex opere operato, that is, the sacrament works of itself. The Lutheran view, in other words, emphasizes that faith is a prerequisite, while the Catholic doctrine stresses the self-sufficiency of the sacrament. The sacrament, it should be emphasized, is not a physical infusion of some spiritual substance into the soul of the person baptized.

That children were baptized in the New Testament is precedent for the practice today. Moreover, the baptism of children is necessary. For all persons are born into this world with original sin, which is sufficient grounds for condemnation. The taint of this sin must be removed. Since children are not capable of exercising the faith needed for regeneration, it is essential that they receive the cleansing wrought by baptism. In Roman Catholic theology, unbaptized infants who die cannot enter into heaven.

Reformed/Presbyterian View: The position held by traditional Reformed and Presbyterian theologians is tied closely to the concept of the covenant. They regard the sacraments, of which baptism is one, as signs and seals of God's grace. Sacraments are not means of grace ex opere operato or in virtue of some inherent content of the rite itself. Rather, as the Belgic Confession says, they are "visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit." In particular, they are signs and seals of God's working out the covenant he has established with the human race. Like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism makes us sure of God's promises.

The significance of the sacrament of baptism is not quite as clear-cut to the Reformed and Presbyterian as to the sacramentalist. The covenant, God's promise of grace, is the basis, the source, of justification and salvation; baptism is the act of faith by which we are brought into that covenant and hence experience its benefits. The act of baptism is both the means of initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation. Charles Hodge puts it this way: "God, on his part, promises to grant the benefits signified in baptism to all adults who receive that sacrament in the exercise of faith, and to all infants who, when they arrive at maturity, remain faithful to the vows made in their name when they were baptized." In the case of adults, these benefits are absolute, while the salvation of infants is conditional upon future continuance in the vows made.

A key step in the argument now occurs: as circumcision was the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament, so is baptism in the New Testament. It is clear that circumcision has been put away; it no longer avails (Acts 15:1-2; 21:21; Gal. 2:3-5; 5:2-6; 6:12-13, 15). Baptism has been substituted for circumcision as the initiatory rite into the covenant. It was Christ who made this substitution. He commissioned his disciples to go and evangelize and baptize (Matt. 28:19). Just as circumcision was required of proselytes converting to

Judaism, so baptism is required of those converting to Christianity. It is their mark of entrance into the covenant.

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The Baptist View: The third view we will examine sees baptism as a token, an outward symbol or indication of the inward change that has been effected in the believer. It serves as a public testimony of one's faith in Jesus Christ. It is an initiatory rite—we are baptized into the name of Christ. Christ commanded the act of baptism (Matt. 28:19–20). Since it was ordained by him, it is properly understood as an ordinance rather than a sacrament. It does not produce any spiritual change in the one baptized. We continue to practice baptism simply because Christ commanded it and because it serves as a form of proclamation. It confirms the fact of one's salvation to oneself and affirms it to others.

The act of baptism conveys no direct spiritual benefit or blessing. In particular, we are not regenerated through baptism, for baptism presupposes faith and the salvation to which faith leads. It is, then, a testimony that one has already been regenerated. If there is a spiritual benefit, it is the fact that baptism brings us into membership or participation in the local church.[Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998, 1100-1110.]

Is baptism necessary for salvation and the forgiveness of our sins?

Baptism does not save anyone. Some people make the mistake of thinking that baptism is essential for salvation. They think that faith + baptism = eternal life. But this is not what the Bible teaches. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one can boast." It is clear from this passage of Scripture that faith in Jesus Christ is the only thing that saves and faith itself is a gift from God.

Salvation does not come by confirmation, communion, baptism, church membership, church attendance, trying to keep the Ten Commandments, or living out the Sermon on the Mount. It does not come by giving to charity or even by believing that there is a God. It does not come by simply being moral and respectable. Salvation does not even come by claiming to be a Christian. Salvation comes only when we receive by faith the gift of God's grace. Hell will be full of people who tried to reach heaven some other way.

Is baptism necessary for membership in the church?

Yes and no. Baptism in the New Testament is closely connected with membership in a local church. In many churches today, baptism and membership are inseparable. If you are baptized at the church, you automatically become a member of the church. If you have not been

baptized (ever) then baptism is a requirement to become a member. Many, if not most, Baptist churches even require a person to be baptized by immersion in order to qualify for membership. (In other words, if someone was baptized by sprinkling, even if it was after salvation, the church would require them to be baptized by immersion in order to qualify.)

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As John Piper explains this close connection between baptism and membership,

The meaning of baptism is woven together with membership in the people of God. And since the local church is an expression of that people, baptism is closely connected to membership in the local church. In the New Testament, being a Christian, being baptized, belonging to the new-covenant people of God, and being a member of a local church were linked together. If you tried to pull one of those out (not a Christian, or not baptized, or not in the new-covenant people, or not a member of local church), it would have made no sense. They belonged together.

At First Family, we have from the beginning based membership on three statements we believe encompass the description of a local church found in Acts 2:

1. "I have confessed Christ as my Lord and Savior and placed my feet on the Gospel as my only way to be saved, which means I am not ashamed to be called a Christian."
2. "I am committed to growing as a disciple, which means I am willing to engage in the habits that identify believers, such as baptism, Bible study, prayer, giving, serving, witnessing, and worshipping, to name a few."
3. "I am committed to church unity, which means I will do my best to keep things right personally with other believers in this body; and when they aren't, I will go to them one-on-one first and settle any differences."

Here is where First Family differs from other churches: we do not require baptism to become a member of First Family (an expression of the local church). Rather, we try to mirror the biblical understanding of how God accepts people into the universal church, which is through salvation. Baptism in the New Testament serves as an outward identification with the people of God similar to the function of circumcision in the Old Testament. So it matters! But the identification is with the people of God (the universal church) rather than with a local body of believers.

Consequently, baptism is not a requirement for membership at First Family. We ask the three questions above, and consider a salvation testimony sufficient. (Note that statement two, which references baptism, is in the future tense and we ask that they

are committed to these things. While we would encourage everyone who is a believer to follow in believer's baptism, we do not require it for membership.)

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What about a “second baptism” or baptism of the Holy Spirit?

The answer to this question is taken from Basic Theology by Charles Ryrie:

Another ministry of the Spirit that is distinctive to this post-Pentecost Age is that of baptizing those who believe into the body of Christ. It was first predicted not in any Old Testament passage but by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11 and parallels). But this ministry was never experienced by anyone during the earthly lifetime of our Lord, for after His resurrection and just prior to His ascension He said it was to happen “not many days hence” on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5 kjv). This distinctive ministry served a particular purpose—adding people to the body of Christ—and since the body of Christ is distinctive to this age, then the baptizing work of the Spirit also would be.

I. Confusion Concerning the Spirit’s Baptizing

Confusion surrounds this area of pneumatology, causing divisions among believers and obscuring of this great truth. Why is this so?

One reason for the confusion relates to an unclear conception of the body of Christ. If one believes that the church began with Abraham or with John the Baptist then it will likely be more difficult to see the distinctiveness of the baptizing ministry of the Spirit in this age. So baptism is usually made a synonym for the conversion experience. But if one recognizes the body as a work of God that began at Pentecost, then the necessity of the Spirit’s baptizing people into that body will be clear.

Overemphasis on water baptism, particularly by immersion, often obscures or even obliterates the doctrine of Spirit baptism. If the two truths are not distinguished, usually the truth of Spirit baptism gets lost, for it is regarded simply as another way of talking about water baptism. E. Y. Mullins, Baptist theologian of a previous generation, understood the baptism of the Spirit as the

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

baptism into the (local) church, implying that literal (water) baptism is a Spirit-guided activity according to 1 Corinthians 12:13. Dale Moody, a Baptist theologian of this generation, states that “God imparts the Spirit in baptism.”

The contemporary Pentecostal association of baptism of the Spirit with a second blessing and/or with the experience of tongues as the evidence of having been baptized adds to the confusion.

Sometimes baptism of the Spirit and filling of the Spirit are not distinguished, with the resulting idea that the “filling-baptism” happens subsequent to conversion and not to all believers. This view does not necessarily involve speaking in tongues. It considers baptism an infilling for special power. The lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that great men like R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody were unclear in this area. Torrey taught that a person could or could not be baptized with the Spirit at the moment of salvation. In his biography of Moody, Torrey recounts Moody’s baptism as something that occurred subsequent to salvation.

Admittedly, sometimes this lack of clarity is innocent; but regrettably sometimes these misconceptions are deliberately promoted. In either case believers are robbed of an important truth that involves our union with Christ and a solid basis for holy living.

II. Characteristics of the Spirit’s Baptizing

A. It is Operative Only in This Dispensation

As already pointed out, no Old Testament prediction of the baptism exists, and our Lord said it would happen for the first time when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Later Peter called this “the beginning” (11:15–16). Also the purpose of the baptism, to join believers to the body of Christ, and the distinctiveness of the body to this dispensation, support the conclusion that this is a ministry operative only in this dispensation.

B. It is Experienced by All Believers in This Dispensation

Three facts support this conclusion. The central text, 1 Corinthians 12:13, clearly states that all have been baptized, just as all have been made to drink of the Spirit (through His indwelling). That this was said of the church people of Corinth, which included such a variety of spiritual conditions,

indicates that carnality does not cause one to miss this ministry.

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Nowhere in the Scriptures is there a single exhortation for anyone to be baptized with the Spirit. This indicates that all believers have experienced this ministry.

If “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 refers to the baptism of the Spirit (which is most likely), then it is something true of the same group who have “one Lord” and “one faith,” that is, all believers.

C. It Occurs at Salvation and is Not Repeated Thereafter

If it did not occur at salvation then there would exist believers who were truly saved but who, because they had not been baptized with the Spirit, did not belong to the body of Christ. Baptism is what joins a believer to the body, so if one could be saved and not baptized, he could be an out-of-the-body believer.

If baptism needs to be repeated, then it could only be if the believer were detached from the body of Christ and needed to be rejoined. Since the first baptism at conversion joins one to the body, then if a second baptism is needed, there would have to have been a removal from the body between the two baptisms.

III. Consequences of the Spirit’s Baptism

A. It Joins Us to the Body of Christ

This involves the following great and often convicting truths. Being in His body means we are risen with Him to newness of life (Rom. 6:4), and we should exercise our gifts to keep that body functioning properly (the context of 1 Cor. 12:13).

Experiencing the one baptism serves as the basis for and exhortation to keep the unity of the body (the context of Eph. 4:5).

The nonnecessity for a second baptism assures us of the security of our position in His body.

B. It Actualizes Our Cocrucifixion with Christ

Being associated with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection establishes the basis for realizing our

separation from the power of indwelling sin and our walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1–10; Col. 2:12).

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IV. Contemporary Doctrine of Two Spirit Baptisms

Because 1 Corinthians 12:13 is so clear about all believers being baptized, and because some contemporary teachers want to justify the concept of a special baptism for power (a second blessing), a doctrine of two Spirit baptisms has arisen that is, as far as I know, a new teaching. Whereas old Pentecostalism uniformly taught that the baptism of the Spirit was an endowment for power, tongues being the evidence of the experience, newer Pentecostalism sees two baptisms. One is that of verse 13, which all believers experience and which is accomplished by the Spirit and places people in the body of Christ. The other is the baptism seen in the book of Acts and is accomplished by Christ to place people in the Spirit for experiences of power. The first happens at conversion and results in a position; the second occurs later and can be repeated and is for power. The first does not require speaking in tongues; the second ideally does.

The New Testament uses the phrase “to baptize with, in, or by the Spirit” only seven times (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13). Actually these seven occurrences can be placed in three categories: the predictions in the Gospels, the pointing ahead and pointing back to Pentecost in the two Acts references, and the doctrinal explanation in 1 Corinthians. In the Gospels it appears more natural to understand Christ as the Baptizer and the Spirit as the sphere into which people are baptized. In Acts and Corinthians it seems to be more natural to understand the Spirit as the Agent of baptism and the body of Christ as the sphere into which people are baptized. However, those distinctions are not hard and fast. Both Christ and the Spirit are Agents, and both the Spirit and the body are spheres. Christ is the ultimate Agent, for He sent the Spirit who is, so to speak, the intermediate Agent (Acts 2:33). Clearly the body is one sphere, and the Spirit is another. This is similar to the Spirit’s work in sealing—He is both the Agent who seals and the sphere in which we are sealed.

However, neo-Pentecostalism needs to make sharp distinctions. The references in the Gospels and in Acts, they say, are references to Christ as Agent and the Spirit as sphere, which bring power to the believer. This is the baptism in the Spirit. The reference in 1 Corinthians reveals the Spirit as the Agent and the body as the sphere and is the baptism by the

Spirit. All believers have been baptized by the Spirit, but not all believers have experienced the baptism in the Spirit.

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Interestingly, ultradispensationalism uses the same argument for two baptisms to support their teaching of two churches within the Acts period. The Petrine church, or Jewish church, existed from Pentecost to Paul, and the body church from Paul on. The Jewish church received power by the baptism in the Spirit, and the Pauline, or body, church is formed by the baptism by the Spirit.

Such an infrequently used and seemingly technical phrase would more likely refer to the same activity in all its occurrences. To establish two separate and quite distinct baptisms is tenuous at best. To see two agents is biblical because of Acts 2:33 and quite normal because different persons of the Trinity are often involved in the same work. Besides, Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism. It is Christ’s work through the agency of the Spirit’s ministry to join those who believe to the church, the body of Christ, with all the privileges and responsibilities that come with that position. [Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999.]

What about infant baptism vs. believer baptism? Is there a difference?

Again, we will rely on John Piper’s excellent resource, A Celebration of Baptism, to answer this question:

One of the things that makes our view of baptism distinct is that we do not think infants should be baptized. The reason is that, on the one hand, infants are not capable of repentance or faith; and, on the other hand, the notion that a person should inherit the blessings of a Christian or be considered a Christian by virtue of his parents’ faith is contrary to New Testament teaching. The most credible and respectable defense of infant baptism says that just as in Israel circumcision was given to eight-day-old infants, so in the church baptism should be given to infants of Christian parents. Now we argue that there is a correspondence between circumcision as a sign of the covenant with Israel and baptism as a sign of the new covenant. We believe, namely, that just as circumcision was administered to all the physical sons of Abraham who made up the physical Israel, so

baptism should be administered to all the spiritual sons of Abraham who make up the spiritual Israel, the Church.

And who are these spiritual sons of Abraham? Galatians 3:7 says: "So you see it is the people of faith who are the sons of Abraham." Since the only way to enter the true Israel of God, the Church, is by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, therefore the symbol of that entry should only be administered to those who believe. Believer baptism bears witness to the teaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:9), Jesus (Matthew 21:43), and the apostles that "not all are children of Abraham just because they are his descendants . . . and it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God" (Romans 9:7, 8). A very important change has occurred in the way God forms his people. In the Israel of old God formed his people through natural offspring. But in the Church, the true Israel, God is forming his people not by natural kinship but through supernatural conversion to faith in Christ. Yes, there is a correspondence between circumcision for the Israel of old and baptism for the Church. Both symbolize membership in the covenant community. But there is also a crucial difference. With the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus and the apostles, the emphasis now is that the spiritual status of your parents does not determine your membership in the covenant community. The beneficiaries of the blessings of Abraham are those who have the faith of Abraham. These are the ones who belong to the covenant community, and these are the ones (in line with Old Testament practice) who should receive the sign of the covenant.

Therefore, what we celebrate in baptism today is the mighty work of God in the hearts of children and adults to bring them to repentance and faith in Christ. When we ask if Jesus is their Savior and Lord, we celebrate the eternally important truth that they have received him for their own. When we baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we celebrate the involvement of the whole Godhead in their conversion and their new relation to each Person in the Trinity. When we immerse them in the water, we celebrate the death and burial of Jesus Christ for our sins. When we raise them up out of the water, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and their participation in it. And when they walk out of the baptismal waters, we celebrate the newness of life in love and joy that Jesus gives.

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My prayer is that the baptismal candidates themselves and everyone who witnesses their baptism will experience a rekindling of love to God for all he has done for us in making us part of the new covenant people through repentance and faith.

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NEXT STEPS

Questions to consider as you continue to reflect on what you learned this week:

- **Take Action:** Have you followed the Lord in believer's baptism? If not, now is the time. We try to schedule a baptism one a month. If you would like more information about when the next baptism is scheduled, indicate so on a Feedback Card or drop an email to info@ffclife.com.
- **Take Courage:** In Matt. 28:19-20, Christ commanded three things: (1) that disciples be made of all nations; (2) that, these disciples be baptized; and (3) that these disciples be taught, and then He promised His disciples (the church) that He would be with them always, even unto the end of the age, in carrying out His three-fold command. This is the Great Commission we follow even to this day. Praise the Lord for His steadfastness and faithfulness to His bride over the centuries!

Work to memorize this week's memory verse: Acts 2:41—So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Our Core Belief this week is **Jesus Christ** (John 1:12): We believe in Jesus Christ, His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, vicarious death, burial and bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His personal future return in power and glory. We are significant only because of our position as children of God.

Remember to use the daily Bible reading plan as part of your walk with Christ, taking the time to reflect on each passage and what it means for your lives.
