



Unit .20

Session .01

Jesus is Baptized

Scripture



Matthew 3:1-17

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, **2** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” **3** For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” **4** Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. **5** Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, **6** and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. **10** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good

fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **11** “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” **13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. **14** John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” **15** But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. **16** And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; **17** and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

What is repentance, and why do you think John the Baptist emphasized the need for personal repentance?

If confession is the bridge to accountability, why do you think it can be so hard for us to genuinely confess to someone?



99 Essential Doctrines

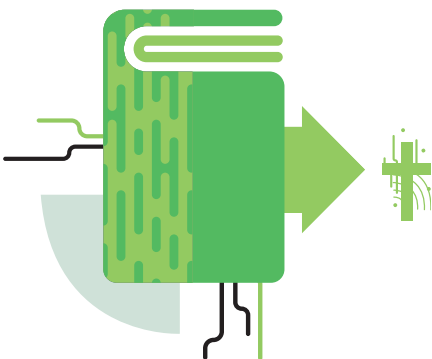
Baptism

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Main Point

True repentance is necessary for the Christian life.

What are some areas in your life where you feel genuinely sorry yet you seem to sin regularly anyway? What are some measures you can take to repent more profoundly in these areas?



Christ Connection

Jesus completely obeyed God and identified with sinners by being baptized like sinners are baptized. His baptism points to His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. For those of us in Christ, the words spoken over Jesus at His baptism are also true of us: we are the Father's beloved children with whom He is pleased.

Why wasn't it enough for the Pharisees to rely upon the faith of their fathers when it came to their own lives?

Why do you think it is important for us as Luke's readers to see Jesus' ministry begin with a confirmation of His identity?



Head

Why do you think repentance begins with a change of mind?

Why is it necessary to have both an accurate understanding of God as well as an accurate understanding of ourselves in order to experience repentance?



Heart

Why is it important for our actions to match our words? How can we see John's actions and words line up in the way they should?

What can we learn from the Pharisees when it comes to thinking that going through the religious motions (attending church and so forth) is enough?



Hands

How does Jesus' identifying with us and allowing us to identify with Him change how we see our personal identity?

What are some ways we can live out Jesus' example of identifying with those who need Him?

Daily Devotions

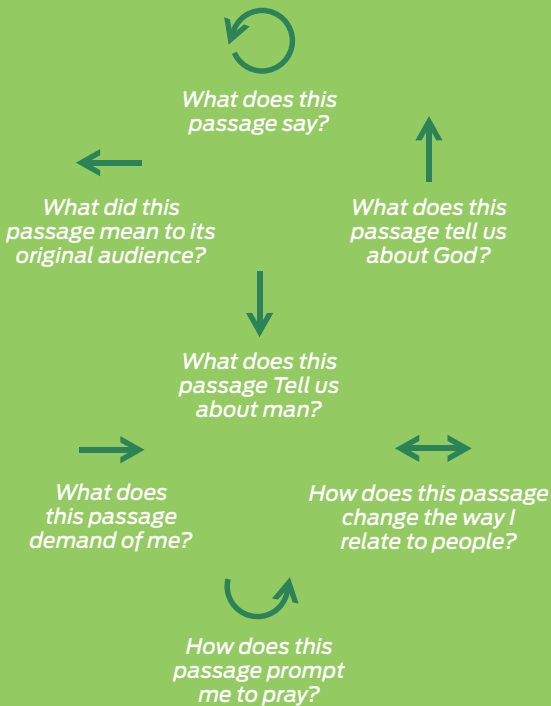


Day 1

Matthew 3:1-6

When Isaiah prophesied that there would be a “voice crying out, “Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!” he was using instructions that people in his day were familiar with. When a king comes to town, you clear the path. This is how you prepare for the arrival of the king. And yet, Jesus did not come to conquer in the way earthly kings conquer. And when John the Baptist made his declaration, his command was to “Repent!” In this new Kingdom, with a new kind of King, what kind of preparation is required? It is not a physical clearing of a path to make way for Him to ride through the town. It is a preparation of the heart, of repenting from sin that hinders our closeness with God. In this way, repentance is like making straight paths for the Lord in our hearts as we throw aside any sin that might entangle us.

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



What would it look like for you to prepare your heart for the Lord today?

Matthew 3:7-12

Sometimes, when we read a verse like verse 10 that says that trees without good fruit will be cut down, we can kind of freak out and find ourselves falling into a trap of performance where we think that we have to work really hard to produce good fruit. (In these verses, Jesus is specifically talking to the religious leaders. But He says something similar to all His disciples in John 15.) In response, we try really hard to be loving, and joyful and patient and kind. But truthfully, that kind of legalism and performance doesn't produce fruit. This is where we must remember that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are fruit of the spirit, not disciplines of the flesh. We do not discipline our way into being more patient. We do not discipline our way into being more loving. Spiritual fruit comes from abiding in Christ, from staying close to Him. To produce good fruit, our focus must be on Christ, not the fruit. The Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, it is our job to abide with Him.

How do you need to change your focus so that abiding in Christ is your primary goal (instead of many of the other good things that often take His place)?

Matthew 3:13-17

God could have chosen from any number of descriptors or names to call Jesus, but He chose "my beloved Son." And then if you fast forward later on when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He begins with "Abba," which is basically a way to say "my beloved father." And then throughout the rest of the New Testament you see over and over again how God adopted us as His children, how we are no longer slaves but sons, and how we receive all the blessings and inheritance of dearly loved children.

God is not quiet about His love for us and His design for us to be a family. And yet, how easy is it for us to forget that we are His children, loved for who we are and not what we do? We so easily believe that if we don't have enough quiet times then God won't love us as much. Or we forget that we are a family and so we don't prioritize our relationships with other believers.

What part of your identity as God's child and a member of God's family is hardest for you to believe and live out of?

Romans

6:1-11

Understanding that baptism is tied to our identity, and therefore weighty, is critical to understanding these verses. Paul is asking the question, “If you are in Christ and have been adopted into His family and are being made like Him, then don’t you realize that means you died to sin just like He did?” Repentance is not just a one-time thing we do when we come to Christ. It is a characteristic that believers embody at all times in their walk with Christ. Why? Because when we identified with Christ, we died to sin. Being in Christ means that we don’t live in sin. We don’t walk in darkness. We live in righteousness. We live in the light. And when we sin, we repent, confess, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

In what areas of your life might you need to repent in order to live out of your identity, as one who has died to sin?

Luke

3:1-22

Running away from sin because it’s “bad” will never be enough motivation to keep anyone out of darkness. We need a clear vision of our identity, clarity on the gifts we receive in Christ, and a full experience of a loving relationship with God. We need to know the hope of what He has called us to and see the wealth of the glorious inheritance He has promised us. We need to experience the immeasurable greatness of His power and His strength. These things are what best motivate us and empower us to live out of our true identity. Being in Christ is not about receiving a list of dos and don’ts. And too often we have limited it to that. But my prayer is that God would open the eyes of your heart to see and receive everything Paul prays in these verses so that you would know who you are in Christ and have freedom to live out of your true identity as a child of God.

In what ways is our identity in God’s family different than the one you experience with your earthly family? In what ways is it similar?