

Q U E S T I O N S

F O R P E R S O N A L G R O W T H O R D I S C U S S I O N

O C T O B E R 1 5 , 2 0 1 7

1 What parts of John's message grabbed your attention this week?

Read the account of the baptism of Jesus by John in Matthew 3:13-16

2 A Why do you think John was hesitant to baptize Jesus?

B In his place, would you have felt the same way? Why?

C If you had been there to witness this event, how do you think you might have described it later?

3 Read the description of the meaning of the symbolism of baptism in Colossians 2:12. It explains that the person being baptized reenacts the death (falling backward), burial (going underwater) and resurrection (coming out of the water) of Jesus. Why do you think that would be a valuable thing to do?

4 Take a moment to silently read below the handout about baptism that is given to each person who is preparing to be baptized. Does it teach you anything new? What is your response to what you read?

5 If you have been baptized as a believer (as opposed to an infant), share the details of your experience with the group. What made you seek baptism at that time? What was the experience like?

- 6 Do you know anyone who was baptized at the service? Were you especially impacted by any of the baptisms that you witnessed? If you have not yet been baptized, did this experience make you lean in that direction?
- 7 Take a moment to pray for the people who were baptized.

Baptism

Your decision to become a Christ-follower has a public side to it. When you are baptized, you declare publicly through your words and your actions that you have turned from your sin and put your trust in Jesus, and in Him alone, for your salvation. It is a public celebration of His work in your life.

The Teaching of Christ

Several passages in the New Testament show the importance of baptism, and reveal that the baptismal candidate is following Christ's example, and obeying His command.

The baptism of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3:21-22. It would be good to read those passages as you think about your own baptism. He gave us an example, and when we go into the waters of baptism, we follow in His footsteps.

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that baptism would be part of the experience of those who would decide to follow Him. He said in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."

It's important to understand that baptism is not a human invention. It was God's idea, and those who experience it are following both the example and the command of Christ Himself!

The Significance of Baptism

All that was needed for your salvation was accomplished by Christ on the cross, and it became yours when you put your trust in Him as His follower. We are saved by faith, not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), and people who trust Christ but die before being baptized (like the thief on the cross) are guaranteed their place in heaven alongside those who do take this step.

Baptism doesn't save you, but it does identify you with Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. The act of total immersion in the water (which is the Biblical mode of baptism, and the one we practice at Heights) is a reenactment of His death and burial, and emerging from the water is a reenactment of His resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). It is a visual way of saying what Paul says in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."

Who should be baptized?

All who have decided to follow Christ should be baptized. We practice what is known as Believers Baptism at Heights – we baptize people who are able to understand the gospel and take that step of faith. Infants are not yet able to do that, so we do not baptize babies. We do pray for babies and their parents through our Parent-Child Dedication services, and you are invited to contact our Children's Ministry if you would like to learn more about that opportunity.

If you are a candidate for baptism, you are invited to contact the church office or speak to a pastor. A short preparatory class will give a church leader the opportunity to confirm that you understand the gospel and have begun to follow Christ, and that this decision has started to make a difference in your life. We will then gladly schedule your baptism.

Jesus died publicly for us, and calls us to live publicly for Him. Baptism is one of many ways to accomplish that goal. It can be a powerful moment in the life of a Christ-follower, one that brings great pleasure and glory to God, and we are eager to help you take that step!