

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 6: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity. Include time to discuss these principles and how to effectively apply them to your life.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 6: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

PURPOSE

Participants will understand the sacraments of baptism and communion, why they are practised and their purpose in the life of the Church.

LEADER'S NOTE

It is important to note that there are a wide variety of approaches to both baptism and communion within the Church. This has sometimes divided the Church. Some may practise baptism by sprinkling rather than full water immersion. Some may use multiple small cups for communion and wafers of bread, while others may choose a common loaf and cup. Teach this material realizing there may be differences of opinion about when a person can be baptised and how it should be carried out. If you live in a community where it is dangerous to be baptised it is unlikely that anyone has seen a baptism performed. Adjust this lesson to the needs and theology of your group.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Do you have any memento that helps you remember someone who is no longer in your life? Do certain times of the year or situations remind you of them? Why do we try to remember those who are no longer in our life?
- ❖ How do shared experiences help a group grow closer? What is a shared experience in the life of your family or group of co-workers that has brought you together?
- ❖ Baptism and communion are physical actions we take to declare our belief. Why is taking a physical action important to our faith?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Christ Sacrificed for Us.** Baptism and communion are two things that serve to remind us of Christ's sacrifice for us. Both are commanded by God and both are intended to draw believers together as one body in obedience and worship. As such, Satan has worked hard to create divisions among believers on the subjects of baptism and communion and, as a result, there are



many debates about how to practise each. Here we will consider what the Bible has to say about their significance and what Jesus instructed believers to do.

❖ Baptism

- **Definition**– A public proclamation of a person's decision to follow Christ, and a symbolic expression of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. (Romans 6:3-4)
- **Significance** – Baptism is a sign of the new covenant. Our baptism demonstrates that we now belong to Jesus Christ. It is an outward act of washing that symbolizes becoming clean inside. It signifies a change, that we have died to our old sin, risen with Christ to live a new life, and been made clean.
- Read the following verses to see what the Bible says about Baptism: Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12, Mark 16:16, Acts 8:12, Acts 22:16
- **Method** – Churches choose to practise baptism in various ways. Many practise immersing a person completely or partially in water and bringing them back up as a sign of their death to sin and resurrection to live by faith in Christ. This is usually a public demonstration, where appropriate. Other churches will practice baptism by sprinkling or pouring water on the head. Individuals may be baptized by clergy, an elder or another believer depending on the church tradition.
- **Who Is It For?** – Some churches reserve baptism for adults or youth who are able to make a confession of faith before others. This is referred to as 'believer's baptism.' Some Church traditions choose to baptise infants as a sign of bringing them up in the covenant of God.

❖ Jesus' Baptism

- Read Matthew 3 to understand the story of Jesus' own baptism.
- John the Baptist was a messenger appointed by God to prepare the way for Jesus. He had been telling the people in Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming and they needed to repent of their sins and be baptised. Many were being baptised.
 - "Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" Vv. 5-6.
- After many had been baptised, Jesus Himself came walking down the path and asked John to baptise Him. Although John was hesitant at first (as he probably felt unworthy) he did as Jesus asked.
 - "But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented" V. 15.
- After Jesus was baptised the Bible tells us that God was very pleased.



- “And behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’” V. 17.

ASK PARTICIPANTS

Why was Jesus baptised, when the baptism of John was for repentance? Jesus – being sinless had no need to repent. (*Jesus was showing approval for John's baptism, and the message he was preaching – also it was a fitting start to His ministry to identify with sinners and demonstrate obedience*)

- **Baptism and Belief:** The book of Acts shows many examples of individuals who were baptised. In these cases, the baptism happened at any body of water available, shortly after belief. It was something that happened as a sign to demonstrate the change that had taken place within them (Acts 8:9-13, Acts 8:26-40, Acts 16:11-15).

TEACH

❖ Communion

- **Definition:** Communion is a practice that represents the last supper. It is symbolic of Christ's death on the cross for the sins of humanity. Christ commanded believers to do this together in remembrance of Him.
- **Significance:** The bread symbolizes the body of Christ (Matthew 26:26). The cup symbolizes the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:27), and it is to be done with other believers, solemnly, in remembrance of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26).
- **Method:** Some churches will have a common cup of wine and a loaf of bread that is shared among all the members. It may either be in the centre or front of the worship space, or be passed around the room from person to person. Alternatively, small cups of wine and wafers of unleavened bread are sometimes also used, especially in larger groups. Substitutions are sometimes made for the bread or wine (for instance, the use of juice) according to local tradition.
- **Who Is It For?:** Communion is for believers in Jesus Christ, any who are old enough to understand the significance of it. Some church groups may restrict communion to those who have been baptized or those in membership at that church.

❖ The Last Supper

- The first communion is called the Last Supper. The Last Supper was Jesus' final meal with the disciples before He was arrested and nailed to the cross.
- Read Matthew 26:17-29 to get a complete picture of the Last Supper.
- In a retelling of Jesus' instructions in the book of 1Corinthians 11:17-34, the apostle Paul warns those that take communion with the wrong motives or perspective.

- ❖ **Obedience:** Baptism and communion provide opportunities for us to obey the commandments of God, to become one with other believers, and to draw nearer to God through faith in Christ. In doing so we remember, and symbolically participate, in Christ's great sacrifice of dying, being buried, and finally resurrected to eternal life.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ❖ What has been your experience with communion? If you are a part of a church community how is it practised? How often do you observe it?
- ❖ Have you proclaimed your faith in Jesus by following the instruction of baptism? Have you had the opportunity to see others baptised?
- ❖ Who should participate in communion? How is communion different from simply taking a meal with others? What makes it symbolic? What makes the act an observance of communion?
- ❖ Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 together and list the warnings Paul gives. How should believers properly prepare their hearts for communion? According to this passage, how should a church practise communion?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Thank God that He provided us with ways to declare our faith and remember His death and resurrection. Pray that participants will draw near to God through obedience to these commands. Thank God for sending His son Jesus to die in our place, and for the great gift of salvation.