

I. The Great Command Jesus Gave Us, Matthew 28:19-20

Bethel's purpose statement is the main command in these verses, to _____
_____.

What are two aspects of making disciples Jesus mentions in these verses? To _____ them and teach them to _____ everything Jesus taught.

II. An Example of Baptism in the Bible, Acts 2:36-41

A. Background: After Jesus ascended to His Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to us just as He promised He would. In this chapter, the Spirit came upon the disciples in a powerful and unique way. They began to speak in languages they didn't even know. This event attracted people from all over the city. Everyone wanted to know what had just happened. Peter stood up and explained it, boldly telling the crowd the very Jesus Christ who they had participated in putting to death was raised to life and was responsible for this phenomenon.

B. How did the people respond to Peter's words (verse 37)?

C. What did he tell them to do (verse 38)?

D. What do you think it means to "accept his message" (verse 41)?

E. What did those who accepted the message do?

F. Reflect on this historical account and put the following in the order of occurrence:

_____ Repent

_____ Believe

_____ Hear the Message

_____ Be Baptized

III. What Does Baptism Mean?

A. I Cor 15:3-4: At the heart of the message of the gospel (Good News) about what God did for us, is that Jesus _____, was _____ and then _____.

B. Romans 6:3-7: The word "baptize" means "to dip or immerse."

C. According to verse three, we were baptized into His _____. According to Romans 6:6, this symbolizes Christians are no longer _____ to _____.

D. According to Romans 6:4-5, we are also united with Christ's resurrection from the dead. This is so we too may _____ a new _____.

Conclusion:

Baptism is the Biblical way of showing the world that I am a follower of Christ and part of His people, the church. By being submerged in water and then lifted out, I am illustrating I have died with Christ to my old sinful life and have been resurrected with Christ to a new life of righteousness. It is a wonderful outward expression of the spiritual reality that has taken place inside of me.

Read these statements. If they are true of you, read them aloud.

1. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and died for all my sins. I have confessed my sin to God and asked for His forgiveness.
2. I have turned away from my old life and joyfully embrace my new life in Christ.
3. I choose to obey His commands instead of just my own desires for my life.
4. I am now a new person in the eyes of God and want to be baptized as a symbol that I am now a follower of Jesus Christ.

IV. Making It Personal.

Is this the first time you have professed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? On the basis of your profession of faith, discuss your answers to the following questions:

1. Why are you going to heaven, and not hell?
2. What sin did God make you aware of in your life for which you needed forgiveness?
3. What needs did Jesus Christ meet in your life when you repented and believed?

V. Share Your Personal Testimony.

If the four conclusion statements are true of you, please write out a personal testimony of your decision to trust Christ as your Savior and Lord.

1. What was your life like before you decided to trust Christ?
2. Describe how and when you decided to trust Christ alone for your salvation.
3. How has this decision made a difference in your life?

VI. Your Decision to be Baptized.

If you would like to be baptized, contact your campus office. They will arrange for you to share your testimony with someone in preparation for baptism.

VII. Some Notes on Practicalities.

A. What should I wear and bring?

You can wear any clothing you would feel comfortable in while wet. Any bathing suit should be modest and perhaps covered by a t-shirt. Bring a towel and something to change into.

B. How will I be baptized?

You will be baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then dipped completely under the water. Bend your knees so your legs don't flop up.

C. What should I say?

You may be asked to share your testimony (the story of how you came to Christ). Be sure to explain your story in such a way that if someone heard your story, they would know what to do to become a Christian. We will also ask you why you want to be baptized. How would you answer that now, having completed this study?

D. Who can baptize me?

You may choose a pastor, or a relative or friend who is a baptized Christian. Please discuss this with a pastor before your baptism. The officiating pastor would also be honored to baptize you.

VIII. Some Common Questions.

A. How long should I have been a believer before I am baptized?

As you can see from the account in Acts chapter 2, the people were baptized almost immediately. Repentance and baptism were seen as two sides of the same coin, (one side being to repent and believe, and the other side being baptized). They simply went together, just as the heads and tails do on a coin. When a person has clearly turned away from a life apart from God and has believed in Jesus, then baptism should follow. Baptism is not a sign of having attained a special standard of spiritual achievement or maturity, but of having believed in Jesus. Young children however who profess faith in Christ may be encouraged to wait until it is clear they firmly understand their commitment and are old enough so they will remember their baptism.

B. What if I was baptized as a baby?

The Scripture seems to be clear that baptism is only for those who are believers. A believer is one who is capable of understanding the need for repentance and faith toward God. A baby is not yet able to comprehend that. Therefore, we would require a new baptism.

C. What if I was a believer but was sprinkled when I was baptized?

Bethel requires baptism of a believer by immersion for membership. We believe this is the most scriptural mode because of the following:

- In the original Scripture text, the word “baptize” means “immersion.”
- Baptism by immersion clearly follows the example of Jesus in His water baptism.
- Baptism by immersion more clearly symbolizes the meaning of our salvation—we have died to the old life and have been brought into a new life with Christ. Baptism by immersion is required for membership at Bethel.

D. What if I was baptized before I understood what it meant to be a believer?

We believe you should be baptized again in light of having become a true believer and to fulfill the true meaning of baptism.

E. What if I was baptized as a believer, but didn't walk as a disciple for years? What should I do?

A child who strays from the teaching, and even from the presence of his parents, never ceases to be a son or daughter. Nor does a child of God cease to be a son of God even while wandering. However, the Lord often had the wayward children of Israel mark their turning back onto God's path by some kind of memorial. Therefore, the one who has not walked as a disciple may want to take his stand as a follower by some kind of act, such as a public confession or re-dedication in a small group. Being re-baptized isn't necessary, but if you believe that is something God would have you do, especially if there are any questions about your commitment to Christ when you were baptized originally, it is acceptable to be baptized again.