

Week 2 – Baptism

January 10, 2021

Group Discussion Guide



(~90 minutes needed)

Begin with 5 minutes of silence + prayer (7-10 minutes)

As you begin this week talking about following Jesus, start out with five minutes of prayerful silence.

[Why silence? Our world is so busy, distracted, and bee-like, with technology filling in any gaps in between. With all that moving, it can be hard to hear others and hear the voice of God. As we gather together, let's press pause and enter into a moment of quiet so that we can hear what God is saying to us and through others.]

Once you're finished with a few moments of quiet centering, have a specified person in the group pray this prayer from Thomas Merton; be sure to also pray for your group time together.

My Lord God, we have no idea where we're going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we're following You does not mean that we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And we hope that we have that desire in all that we are doing. We hope that we'll never do anything apart from that desire. And we know that if we do this, You will lead us by the right road, though we may know nothing about it. Therefore, we will trust You always, even though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for You are always with us, and You will never leave us to face our perils alone. Amen.

Read this overview (1 minute)

We know everyone here is at a different place in their faith and growth looks very different on a case-by-case basis. What does it look like, though, to grow from wherever we are now to continually making disciples? What's Next will help us to unpack and highlight possible next steps.

This week, we're looking at baptism.

When we decide to follow Jesus, baptism is the beginning of that journey. Much like when two individuals say, "I do," they enter into the covenant of marriage and become one, baptism is the time and means by which we enter into a relationship with God – where we have our sins washed away and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But all too often (if you've been baptized), in the way we go about our day-to-day lives, we forget our baptism. Sure, it was a line in the sand moment when we confessed that, "Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God." But what would it look like for that confession - plus the reality of us dying to our old self to be made alive in Christ - to be manifested today, tomorrow, and forevermore?

That's what today's discussion will dive into.

Scripture + Debrief in small groups (30 minutes)

Split your group into triads to read the following Scriptures and debrief the sermon together.

- What is your baptism story? When did you get baptized? What was it like? Where was it? Why did you get baptized? If you haven't been baptized, why not?
- How did Sunday's message deepen your faith? How did it challenge you as a disciple of Jesus?
- **Read Matthew 3:13-17; Romans 6:1-14; Acts 2:1-41.** In his sermon, Dan emphasized these scriptures on baptism. What do these verses tell you about the importance of Christian baptism? What truth about baptism do you feel like you need to hold onto as you enter 2021?
- How would you describe your "old self" before Jesus? What difference has He made in your life?
- Do you feel like you're "alive in Christ" and that your "old self" is dead and gone? Why or why not?
- How do these verses expand your thinking of how you previously thought of baptism?

Transition back to one large group for recap and baptism practice discussion (30 minutes)

Ask a few questions about each person's time in their smaller groups:

- What were some of the things that came from your smaller group discussions?
- Take turns with each person sharing with the whole group their individual reflections on the baptism practice. Then, after one person has finished, pray over that person. If people aren't quite sure what to share, have them answer questions like the following:
 - What was the practice like for you? How did it feel?
 - What did you like about this practice?
 - How did this practice impact you personally?

Finish with prayer (10 minutes)

Finish your group session with prayer. You might designate someone in your group to write down everyone's prayer requests and then send them to the whole group for everyone to be praying about through the week.

- What is on your heart that you need prayer for?
- Who in your life needs prayer?

Have someone close your time together by interceding for the requests that were shared.