

# The Baptism Milestone

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## The Baptism Milestone

Milestone: (mil'stōn') n. a significant or important event in history, in the career of a person, etc.

At Church in the Vineyard (CTV), we speak frequently of a journey with God. We think of our spiritual life as a growth process. Yet, we also recognize milestones along the way. These are points of significance where progress is marked and steps with God are celebrated. Currently, we encourage people to consider three different milestones: child dedication, baptism and membership.

The ceremony of baptism is the way first century Christians publicly declared their faith in and allegiance to Jesus. This was the way they said to their community: "I'm throwing my lot in with Jesus Christ." Baptism involved dipping the person down into a body of water and pulling them back up again. It is a picture of death and resurrection, a reminder that in Jesus we end an old life and begin a new one.

Baptism at CTV is for anyone, young or old, who wants to express outwardly the reality of faith in Christ in their hearts through this ancient ceremony. The actual ceremony takes place once a year outside. We have our baptism service on a Sunday. We combine it with a picnic and spend the whole day celebrating the faith of our friends and family. Each person and child being baptized shares their faith story (it can be written and even read by a friend or parent). Our next Baptism service will be held on September 7, 2008.

What follows is a self-guided study. Read through it and answer the questions as best as you can. The study uses excerpts from the Bible and historical information to help you understand the meaning of baptism so you can discern whether or not this ceremony is for you. There is an answer key at the back, which includes some notes about the answers to the questions. After you complete the study, contact the office to set up a brief interview to review your answers and ask your own questions.

## Where a Person Is Without Christ

Because Baptism marks a point in our journey, we want to retrace the steps folks often take in their progress towards faith. And we begin our study with some thinking about where we are and what life is like prior to knowing Jesus.

Read the following scripture and then answer the question. The answers are found in a key in the back. It is probably best to take a section at a time, answering the questions for that section and then comparing the answers.

(Ephesians 2:1-3 NLT) "Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. {2} You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. {3} All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else."

Where is a person without Christ? Answer: (1)

(a)

(b)

(Colossians 1:21 NLT) "This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions,"

What does this verse say about where we were without Christ? Answer: (2)

(a)

(b)

Why were we all these things (look at both Colossians 1:21 and Ephesians 2:1-3 above)? Answer: (3)

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Read the following verse and see if you can identify what the heart of sin is.

(Romans 1:20-21 NLT) "From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God. {21} Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became dark and confused."

The heart of sin is ..... Answer: (4)

Consider the following frequently asked questions:

- What is God's standard?

Answer: Perfection.

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- But what if I only disobeyed one command?

Answer: You're still guilty.

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

"You only have to fall out of one window to be outside the house."

- Does everyone have enough sin to deserve God's judgment?

Answer: Unfortunately, yes.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

So what can we do on our own to deal with our sin? We consider that in the next section. (First check your answers and then move on)

### Helpless People Need God's Help

(Romans 5:6 NLT) "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

How are we described in the above statement? Answer: (5)

This means on our own, we can do nothing. But that's not the end of the story. God did something.

(Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT) "But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, {5} that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!)"

Two words characterize God's disposition or attitude towards us, what are they? Answer: (6)

(a)

(b)

How has God acted in light of these feelings for us? Think of as many verbs as possible.

Answer: (7)

Answer: (8)

Answer: (9)

We call God's help for us grace. Grace is God giving us what we cannot earn or produce ourselves. We define grace as God's unmerited favor. That means we don't perform to get or keep it. That means he gives us good things we do not deserve.

We are saved by grace, we are rescued from God's wrath by God's gift.  
(First check your answers and then move on)

### How Do We Personally Receive God's Gift?

(Ephesians 2:8-9 NLT) "God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. {9} Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

Do we maintain a good life to be rescued from judgment?

Answer: (10)

How then does a person receive God's help?

Answer: (11)

Faith implies trust or confidence in something. Jesus is the object of our faith, the thing we are trusting in as God's source of grace to us. It is Jesus who pays the price for our shortcomings. It is Jesus we are trusting to show us how to live a new life. Instead of trusting in anything else, we come to a point where the only thing we believe makes us right with God, is the person of Jesus and his death on the cross for us.

Even faith does not earn our salvation. Faith is merely the channel by which we receive the gift. It is our hands unwrapping the birthday present or our pen signing the check which we cash at the bank. God offers us a payment for our sin debt. He is paying the bill through Jesus. Faith just says, "I accept that payment for myself. There is nothing of me in it." There is nothing flattering about it. Salvation is God's grace reaching out and rescuing us.

It is crucial that we understand what the Bible means by faith. It is more than simply intellectually believing something is true. What does the following verse teach you about faith?

(John 1:12 NIV) "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Here, faith is the same as something else. What is that something else?

Answer: (12)

What light do the following verses shed on what it means to believe in Jesus?

(Romans 10:9-10 NLT) "For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. {10} For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved."

Answer: (13)

Answer: (14)

To receive or believe in Jesus means to accept his payment for sin as the payment for your sin. You are believing that what Jesus did by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, he did for you. He is your Savior.

To receive Jesus is also to embrace him as the leader of your life. Sometimes the Bible calls this confessing or acknowledging him as your Lord. By receiving him, you acknowledge his right to be the authority in your life and you express a willingness to be led and changed by him in the new life he offers you. When first century Christians were baptized, they confessed "Jesus as Lord." They

publicly declared, in front of friends, family and neighbors, that they were giving Jesus the allegiance of their hearts. Sometimes this statement was considered treason against the Roman government, since citizens were expected to claim Caesar as Lord.

(First check your answers and then move on)

### What Is God's Purpose In Making Us Alive?

(Ephesians 2:10 NLT) "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

Why are we created anew in Christ Jesus?

Answer: (15)

So \_\_\_\_\_ follow \_\_\_\_\_. Answer: (16)

We work because we are saved. We don't work to be saved. Why?

Answer: (17)

### The Positive Side of God's Gift

Not only are we saved from God's wrath, God's grace also gives us something.

(John 3:16 NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

We receive eternal life the same way that we are saved from God's wrath. How is that?

Answer: (18)

What Is Eternal Life?

(John 17:3 NIV) "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

Answer: (19)

Because eternal life is a relationship, imagine three things that you would expect to follow your introduction to God through faith.

Answer: (20)

Answer: (21)

Answer: (22)

(First check your answers and then move on)

## Check Point 1: Have you thrown in your lot with Jesus?

Given the above thoughts about where we are without Jesus and what God offers, where do you stand? Carefully think through the following questions:

Have you come to the point where...

- You understand the fact that you sin?
- You understand your sin has separated you from God?
- You realize that you cannot be good enough or do anything to fix your relationship with God via your own works?
- The only thing you are trusting in to make you right with God and give you eternal life is the fact that Jesus paid for your sins by dying on the cross?
- You are willing to grow and change in the new and eternal life that Christ offers (you confess him as Lord to receive him)?

If you answered yes to all of the above questions, then you are definitely ready to be baptized. Being able to confidently say yes to each of these questions confirms that you are a child of God by faith.

If you know your answers to some of the above are “no” or you had some reservations about answering yes, perhaps you are not ready to be a baptized. We respect the place you’re in very much and still want to walk with you on your journey with God. Think carefully about what questions you need answered, what concerns do you have? What is keeping you from throwing in your lot with Jesus?

## The Meaning of Baptism

Since baptism is a way of declaring the reality of our faith, we have first covered the reality of our faith and now move on to the meaning of the symbol or ceremony. We also use this section to explain the method of baptism that we use in our tradition.

When a person in Bible times came to truly believe in Jesus, to be saved, taking Him as his/her personal savior and Lord, this was not a private matter. New believers participated in a symbolic ritual called Baptism. Baptism in no way saved them, but it was a powerful outward symbol showing what had happened inside of them. It communicated their identification with Christ to the world.

## Who was Baptized in the Bible?

People who signed up to be disciples were baptized. The Bible's word for a real Christian is "disciple". It means to be a learner. Read the following verses and identify the two-part learning process of being a disciple.

(Matthew 28:19-20 NIV) "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Baptism represents a person's initiation or initial introduction into the Church (the collection of all of Christ's disciples). Baptism doesn't accomplish this introduction, faith does. But Baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality. In the New Testament world, it was a way to publicly proclaim one's faith in and allegiance to Christ. Jesus commanded us to baptize and the early church took his command seriously as we see in the following passages.

(Acts 8:12 NIV) "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

(Acts 18:8 NIV) "Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

These passages clearly show \_\_\_\_\_ first, \_\_\_\_\_ second.

Answer: (23)

Baptism comes right on the heels of faith, but always after. The above verses describe the practice of Baptism in the first 30 years of the Church. The accounts recorded cover a diverse geographical area and a diverse mix of cultures and show us that Baptism is a meaningful symbol for all God's people at all times.

The Board of Directors of Church in the Vineyard believe that we should continue the New Testament practice and so we practice what is often called Believer's Baptism - Baptism for those who declare a personal faith commitment to Christ.

(First check your answers and then move on)

### What Does The Word Mean?

The word Baptize means to dip or wash something. It was also used to describe the process a piece of cloth went through when it was dyed.

(Acts 2:38-39, 41 NLT) "Peter replied, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. {39} This promise is to you and to your children, and even to the Gentiles--all who have been called by the Lord our God. {41} Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church--about three thousand in all."

What plays the part of the dye, what were people baptized into?

Answer: (24)

To be associated with a person's name meant to be connected to all that they are and represent. The New Testament pattern was to be baptized into the name of Jesus, so it symbolizes being identified with Him and His sacrifice on the cross.

(First check your answers and then move on)

### What Is The Inward Or Spiritual Meaning Of Baptism?

Read the following verses in Romans and write down what these verses say about the spiritual reality that the outward act of baptism represents.

(Romans 6:3-5 NIV) "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? {4} We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. {5} If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."

Answer: (25)

Answer: (26)

Church historians tell us that the early Church practiced a method of baptism where the person was placed completely under water and then brought up again. This method of Baptizing is often called immersion. This was the practice for all who were able (the ill and dying were sprinkled).

Why do you think immersion is a great way to represent the deeper meaning of baptism? (Try to come up with three reasons)

Answer: (27)

(a)

(b)

(c)

(First check your answers and then move on)

## Check Point 2: Is Baptism For You?

Based on this understanding of baptism, is this something God wants you to do?

Why or why not?

If yes, are you willing to publicly share this at a Baptism service?

## The Personal Implications of Baptism

When we publicly identify with Jesus, it changes the way people around us see us. To some, we are a threat; to others, we are a source of great joy and encouragement. Baptism also represents a change which should take place inside us. We have the full resources of God to live a new life. We need to pursue that on a daily basis.

## You and the God Who Saved You

What is the principle stated in these verses?

(Romans 6:5-6 NIV) "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. {6} For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Answer: (28)

How do we experience this freedom from sin?

(Romans 6:11-13 NIV) "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. {12} Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. {13} Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

Answer: (29)

Answer: (30)

Answer: (31)

Answer: (32)

(First check your answers and then move on)

## You and the People Around You

(1 Peter 2:15-17 NLT) "It is God's will that your good lives should silence those who make foolish accusations against you. {16} You are not slaves; you are free. But your freedom is not an excuse to do evil. You are free to live as God's slaves. {17} Show respect for everyone. Love your Christian brothers and sisters. Fear God. Show respect for the king."

Other Christ-followers are now called \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: (33)

So we are to show them what? Answer: (34)

To everyone, we show \_\_\_\_\_ . Answer: (35)

To those in authority over us (the king), we give \_\_\_\_\_. Answer: (36)

Everyone in your life (family, friends, co-workers) may not be thrilled to learn of your new faith (or to hear that you are being baptized, or to hear that you are being baptized again). This is to be expected.

(2 Timothy 3:12 NIV) "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Based on this verse and your observations of how people treat those who are different, what kind of response might you expect, at least from some people?

Answer: (37)

If you are opposed or harassed because of your faith, remember you are not alone.

(1 Peter 2:21-23 NIV) "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. {22} He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. {23} When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

What clues do these verses give you for dealing with persecution?

Answer: (38)

Answer: (39)

Answer: (40)

Answer: (41)

(First check your answers and then move on)

Congratulations, you made it to the end! Please contact the church office to set up a brief touching base interview to help you continue your preparation for baptism. ([office@chitv.org](mailto:office@chitv.org) or 610-345-1102).

What follows are some practical instructions for participating in the baptism service.

## The Day of the Baptism

When to Arrive: Arrive a half hour before the service starts to meet with Pastor Chip and ask any last minute questions.

What to bring: Bring a towel and a dry change of clothes.

What to wear: Males: A T-shirt and bathing trunks, Females, where a T-Shirt and shorts over a bathing suit.

What will the service be like?

- We will begin by singing a couple of worship songs.
- Pastor Chip will explain the meaning of baptism.
- We will baptize you in groups. The groups will be determined before the service.
  - All of the members of a given group will come forward and share their faithstories. (See below for faithstory guidelines).
  - Then we will proceed down to the pool, one a time, and be baptized.
  - We will sing in between each group and at the end.
- If you would like anyone who has played a significant part in your conversion to participate in baptizing you, or if you and your spouse would like to be baptized together, please let Pastor Chip know ahead of time.

## FaithStory Presentation Guidelines

Clearly, you are a letter from Christ...written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God...carved not on stone, but on human hearts. 2 Corinthians 3:3

Thank you for being willing to share your FaithStory in a service or event at Church In The Vineyard. Your FaithStory is a great opportunity to tell people how Jesus has changed your life. People who hear your FaithStory are genuinely encouraged and challenged.

FaithStories give our guests a chance to meet people like them, who are part of God's story and a faith community that they can be a part of too. The Purpose of Faith Stories at CTV is twofold: first, they uphold the importance of

outreach at our church. This is accomplished through you clearly telling the story of how you became a believer in Jesus Christ. Secondly, they reinforce the theme of a given service or event through a real life story. This is accomplished by you sharing something specific that God has taught you or has done in your life since coming to faith.

Here are some guidelines to assist in you preparing and sharing your FaithStory.

Prayer            Begin with prayer, asking God to help you in this process.

Content           Please make clear how you came to believe in Jesus Christ and then go on to discuss how your particular journey relates to the topic of the service or event at which you are speaking. If necessary, feel free to ask Pastor Chip lots of questions for clarification about the direction of the day.

1. Be authentic, be you.

- Tell your story the way it happened—be real! Authenticity and honesty connect with listeners.
- Don't embellish your story or dwell excessively on past sins, this is not public confession.
- Don't feel pressure to make everything sound perfect.

2. Be intentional

- Carefully review the Program Detail Sheet as you prepare.
- Identify one main idea or theme you want to communicate through out.
- Always enhance the reputation of Jesus. He is the one who has forgiven and changed you.
- Refrain from criticizing or putting down people, groups, or churches.
- Speak like you are talking to guests of our church who don't know you, avoiding inside jokes or "those of you who know me" statements.

### 3. Be concise

- Avoid clichés and overly religious language. Explain biblical concepts or experiences in your own words.
- Keep your story 5 minutes or less in length. (This is 1-1/4 to 1-1/3 typed pages, single space, 12pt font.)
- Think in chapters or blocks and bridge them together. The blocks can be 1) what my life was like before I became a Christian 2) how I became a Christian 3) how Jesus has changed my life since I decided to follow him. (If you are speaking to a theme—how God has worked in specific area of your life, we still want you to spend some time on blocks 1 and 2 so we can all here how you came to Christ in the first place.)
- Remember this is your FaithStory not your life story!

**Time:** It is imperative that you do not go beyond the five-minute time limit due to the schedule of our service.

**Place In the Program** Generally we do not finalize the program order for our services until the Tuesday prior. You will receive a written copy via Email. You should arrive at the service/event at least 30 minutes before the start so there is time to cover a mic check and go over the final details.

**Preparation** Send a written draft to Pastor Chip at least two weeks prior to your speaking date. ([Chip@chitv.org](mailto:Chip@chitv.org)). His cell number is 610-476-8659. You can also fax it to the office at 610-354-1103.

Thanks for sharing your FaithStory with us!

## After the Baptism

For some of us, Baptism is a way to say something that's been true all along. For others, it's a way to clearly communicate to everyone who will watch or listen the new beginning that God has brought to our lives. In either case, the symbol and ceremony are rich with meaning. The challenge is to follow up the experience with the types of relationships which will enhance the life we've signed up for in Christ.

At CTV, we offer classes, groups and serving opportunities to help deepen our individual connections with Christ. Please stop in at the information counter or check out the website for more information.

## Answer Key

- (1) (a) Dead or doomed  
(b) Under God's anger
- (2) (a) We were far away from him.  
(b) We were his enemies.
- (3) (a) many sins/full of sin (Ephesians)  
(b) doing (obeying) Satan's agenda (This is not a conscious choice or a deal where we are brainwashed. We naturally oppose God and do what God's adversary wants us to do). (Ephesians)  
(c) following our evil nature (Ephesians)  
(d) evil thoughts and actions (Colossians)
- (4) Not giving God his rightful place in our lives (worshiping him, giving him thanks). We live like we don't need God and from this independence flows all the behaviors and attitudes we typically think of as sin.
- (5) Powerless
- (6) (a) He is rich in mercy  
(b) He loves us very much
- (7) Despite the fact that we were dead (had nothing to offer him), he made us alive. He helped us start over.
- (8) Despite the fact that we were the objects of his wrath, he rescued us (or saved us) from the punishment we deserved.
- (9) Despite the fact that we were enemies and separated from him, he reached out to us, providing a way for us to come back to him.
- (10) No, salvation is a gift.
- (11) By faith

- (12) It is the same as receiving - taking in. This involves personally embracing the person of Jesus. It is more than believing facts about him. It implies an entrusting of oneself to him.
- (13) Confess/admit Jesus as Lord.
- (14) Believe God raised him from the dead.
- (15) To do good works.
- (16) So works follow faith.
- (17) We could never do enough to earn back perfect status. In response to all he has done, we serve him.
- (18) By having faith.
- (19) A relationship with God, which begins now and ends in the life to come.
- (20) Growth in knowing him.
- (21) Changes in my life.
- (22) A sense of real intimacy with God.
- (23) Faith first, water baptism second.
- (24) They were baptized into Jesus' name.
- (25) I have been identified with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
- (26) I have been given a new life and the guarantee of eternal life.
- (27) These are possible answers, you may uncover some others.
- (a) All of us are covered, i.e. total identity with him.
  - (b) "Going under" symbolizes death, being brought back out, resurrection and new life.
  - (c) Complete cleansing.
- (28) Sin no longer has control over me. Its power in my life has been broken. I no longer need to do its bidding.

- (29) Believe that the promise is true, sin no longer controls me.
- (30) Believe that I am alive to God and his agenda.
- (31) Don't follow the agenda of sin for myself.
- (32) Actively follow God's agenda for my life.
  
- (33) Brothers and Sisters: This means we are part of God's family; we have a new connection with others.
- (34) Love
- (35) Respect
- (36) Honor
  
- (37) Hostility, anger, a hard time, teasing, etc.
  
- (38) Follow Christ's steps
- (39) Stay innocent.
- (40) Don't retaliate or try to get back.
- (41) Trust God to take care of you.