**Learn in Community**



Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Why is my church family important?**

“For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.” ([Matthew 18:20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.20))

*When we think of church, it’s easy for our minds to be instantly drawn to the building where we attend. However, in God’s design, the church isn’t the building that we gather in. Instead, the church has everything to do with the people who are gathered there. In essence, the biblical church is not a building that we go to, but a family of believers we belong to.*

*As our Father, God’s heart is to adopt us into His family (*[*Ephesians 1:5*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph1.5)*). When we choose to put our faith in Jesus, we instantly join God’s family. We not only belong to Him, but we belong to each other. Just like our natural families here on earth were meant to function, God uses our church family to meet our needs. A healthy church family offers love, encouragement, guidance, and accountability. As the family of God—the Church—we grow together, celebrate together, share together, and even serve together. As we make a commitment to God’s family, we will become stronger, more devoted followers of Jesus.*

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| First time leading *Learn* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**  Other than the major holidays (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.), what’s your favorite event to celebrate and why? |

Many of us welcome the chance to celebrate! The website <https://www.checkiday.com/> shares celebrations for every single day. For example, March 1st is National Peanut Butter Lover’s Day, National Pig Day, World Compliment Day, and many more. There’s no end to things we can celebrate—from holidays and birthdays to smiles and compliments.

As the Church, we have much to celebrate too. We celebrate the mercy and grace of God through the work of Jesus on the Cross. We celebrate the hope of an empty tomb and the power of a resurrected Savior. We celebrate changed hearts and changed lives. Nothing quite brings all those celebrations together like water baptism. As His people, we celebrate water baptism together.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: As a child, what were you taught about water baptism?



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| **QUESTION**  As a child, what were you taught about water baptism? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

We may live in the most self-centered society in history. Everything seems to be about self: *discover and create yourself, be true to yourself, satisfy yourself*. Water baptism pushes back against all of those human values.

Water baptism is an act of obedience to the only true Creator. It’s symbolic of dying to oneself in order to identify fully with Christ. We each exchange what we want for ourself for what God wants for us. God wants us to be in a life-giving relationship with Him and each other. As the video stated, water baptism is deeply personal, but it’s also a symbol of community.

**An Outward Symbol of an Inward Change**

Read [Acts 16:11–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac16.11-14).

This story takes place toward the beginning of Paul’s second missionary journey. He was traveling the known world, sharing the good news of Jesus with anyone who would listen. Philippi was a Roman colony filled with mostly Gentiles (non-Jews). Lydia was a businesswoman who had gathered with some other women at a riverbank. As she listened to Paul sharing the gospel, the Lord opened Lydia’s heart and she believed! This was her moment of conversion.

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| **QUESTION**  What do you notice about God’s role in Lydia’s conversion? |

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| **QUESTION**  What do you notice about Paul’s role in Lydia’s conversion? |

**A Willing Act of Obedience**

Read [Acts 16:15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac16.15).

After her conversion, Lydia chose to be baptized in water. This pattern in the New Testament never changes: First salvation, then water baptism. Water baptism doesn’t earn salvation. It’s an act of worship in response to the gift of salvation, an outward expression of an inward change. There was no hesitation in Lydia’s obedience to be water baptized.

Jesus expects all believers to be baptized in water ([Matthew 28:19–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt28.19-20)). As our example, He chose to be water baptized ([Matthew 3:13–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt3.13-17)). When we place our faith and trust in Jesus, then water baptism is our next step too!

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| **QUESTION**  Why is it important to understand that water baptism is not a requirement or replacement for salvation? |

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| **QUESTION**  Why is it important to be baptized in water? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *Although today’s water baptism is a hands-on event done with two people, one person serving to lower the second person into the water, baptism in the days of Jesus was not the same.*  *While two individuals were usually also involved then, the manner in which the act was carried out appears to have been very different. Of all the art passed down through the generations of the Church, two of the earliest artistic depictions of Christianity show water baptisms. Dated just over one hundred years after the completion of the New Testament, these pieces of art show the baptizer leading the individual into the water. However, the actual physical immersion was completed alone by the one being baptized.* |

**A Symbol of Our Union with Christ**

Read [Romans 6:3–8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro6.3-8).

The Book of Romans is a letter written by the apostle Paul. In this letter, Paul explained the gospel—our need *for* Jesus, our hope *of* Jesus, and our new life *in* Jesus. In this passage, Paul emphasized our coming together with Christ. We’re united with Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection.

In baptism, going under the water identifies with Christ’s death and burial. The person you used to be in your sin, selfishness, and slavery dies. Coming out of the water identifies with Christ in His resurrection. Because of Him, we have new life! In Christ, we find ourself free from sin’s rule over us. While we may still battle temptation, the new life we have because of Jesus empowers us to overcome those temptations and reject sin. We belong *to* Jesus, and we belong *with* His people.

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| **QUESTION**  What does it mean to be united with Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**  What are some examples of other things people unite themselves with when they don’t know Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**  How does our being united with Christ also create unity with other believers? |

**Reflect**

**We Celebrate Water Baptism Together**

In the *Cast Away* film, Tom Hanks plays a FedEx executive named Chuck Noland who is the sole survivor of a plane crash. He ends up alone on an island with only the packages from the plane to keep him company. In one of those packages, Chuck finds a volleyball, which he appropriately names Wilson. He paints the ball to look like a face and carries on full conversations with his “friend.”

When Chuck attempts to leave the island, he loses Wilson in the ocean. This results in an unforgettable scene in which Chuck screams and cries as if he’s lost an actual person. The viewer feels the weight of the moment even though it’s only a volleyball. Why? Because we know we weren’t created to do life alone.

Water baptism shows others our choice to do life connected with God. It’s an important reminder of what God has saved us from, and also what God has saved us for. This symbolic act of obedience is both personal and public. It’s an important way of going public with our faith. It’s also a great moment to worship God with our church family and to encourage new believers. Water baptism is a celebration!

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**  What does water baptism mean to you? |

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| **QUESTION**  How would you explain the importance of water baptism to someone else? |

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| **QUESTION**  What are some specific examples of how you are now living a new life in Christ? |

**Activate**

Have you been baptized in water? If your answer is no, then the next question to consider is: Have you placed your faith and trust in Jesus? Jesus’ death on the Cross paid the price for our sin, and His resurrection three days later secured our hope forever. Because of what He did, we can live in freedom, and we can have hope. Are you ready to invite Him to be your Savior today?

If you are a Christian, then the next question is: What are you waiting for? Water baptism is an important next step after salvation. It’s an act of obedience to God. It’s spiritually significant and a public declaration of your new life in Christ.

**Challenge**

If you’re a Christian who has never been baptized in water, talk to a Christian friend, pastor, or church leader about it, as the next step on your faith journey. It will be a special moment for you and for your church family! If you have been baptized, look for opportunities to encourage new believers to do the same. Share with them why you were baptized in water and what it meant to you.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week. |

Before next time, continue to spend time in God’s Word with the personal devotions.

**What We Believe**

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| **Official Doctrine**  The ordinance of baptism by immersion in water (not sprinkling) is commanded in the Scriptures ([Mark 16:16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk16.16)). All who repent and believe on Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord are to be so baptized. This act of baptism symbolically declares to everyone that the old sinful nature and lifestyle of the baptized believer died with Christ at salvation and a new spiritual being has been raised with Christ through His resurrection to live a new life ([Matthew 28:19](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt28.19); [Mark 16:16](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk16.16); [Acts 10:47–48](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac10.47-48); [Romans 6:4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro6.4)). |
| **The Significance of This Doctrine**  Water baptism is not simply a religious custom. It embodies the central message of the Christian faith. Water baptism is a one-time event in which the new believer announces publicly that they are now a child of God who has identified with Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. This ordinance focuses regular attention on the central truth of Christianity. |

**Learn on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: We Celebrate Water Baptism Together**

Read [Acts 16:11–15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac16.11-15).

Look back over Learn in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about water baptism? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 2: Jesus Is Baptized in Water**

Read [Matthew 3:11–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt3.11-17).

John the Baptist knew Jesus had come to earth to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world ([John 1:29](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.29)). So he was hesitant when Jesus asked to be baptized. John knew Jesus didn’t need to repent of any sins, and he knew that Jesus was greater than he was. But Jesus was committed to following God’s will.

Something remarkable happened when Jesus was baptized! A visible representation of the Holy Spirit came down and the voice of God the Father proclaimed who Jesus was. In this scene, we see the Trinity fully present and working together.

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| **QUESTION**  Why was Jesus baptized in water? |

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| **QUESTION**  What can we learn from how John the Baptist spoke of himself in verse [11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt3.11)? |

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| **QUESTION**  What do you think is the significance of what the Voice from heaven said? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 3: Jesus Speaks about Water Baptism**

Read [Matthew 28:16–20](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt28.16-20).

In this passage, the resurrected Jesus was giving some final instruction to His disciples. This is often referred to as the Great Commission. Jesus is basically saying, “As you go, make disciples—and this is what that will look like.” Jesus’ desire is for His followers to be baptized in water just as He was. Water baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a vital step in the discipleship process.

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| **QUESTION**  How would you state the Great Commission in your own words? |

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| **QUESTION**  Who has God put in your life that you can be discipling, either leading them to know Jesus or to grow in Him? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 4: Water Baptism Is a New Identity**

Read [Galatians 3:26–29](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ga3.26-29).

In this letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul was trying to confront a false teaching about the nature of true salvation. Some Jewish leaders were trying to require believers to follow Jewish cultural and dietary laws in order to be a part of the family of God. Paul was opposed to this teaching as he knew that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. In this passage, he compared being united with Christ in baptism with putting on new clothes. As believers, we have a new covering and a new identity in Christ as His chosen people.

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| **QUESTION**  According to this passage, what makes us children of God? |

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| **QUESTION**  How is being united with Christ (as expressed through water baptism) like putting on new clothes? |

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| **QUESTION**  What are some old identities you have left behind in order to follow Jesus? |

**Learn on Your Own**

**Day 5: Water Baptism Is for All Who Believe**

Read [Acts 8:26–40](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac8.26-40).

This passage tells a very unusual story about how God supernaturally intervened to bring a faithful believer to someone who was seeking Him. Philip helped the Ethiopian man make sense of Isaiah’s prophetic words, explaining how the passage revealed Jesus.

While the specific moment is not recorded, we know the Ethiopian man had a conversion experience because he immediately wanted to take the next step—water baptism. There is no reason to delay in being water baptized. You don’t have to be a mature, veteran Christian. Water baptism is for anyone who has asked Jesus to forgive their sins and become the Lord of their life.

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| **QUESTION**  What is inspiring about Philip’s encounter with this Ethiopian man? |

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| **QUESTION**  Can you recall a recent time when you tried to help someone make sense of their questions by pointing them to Jesus? |