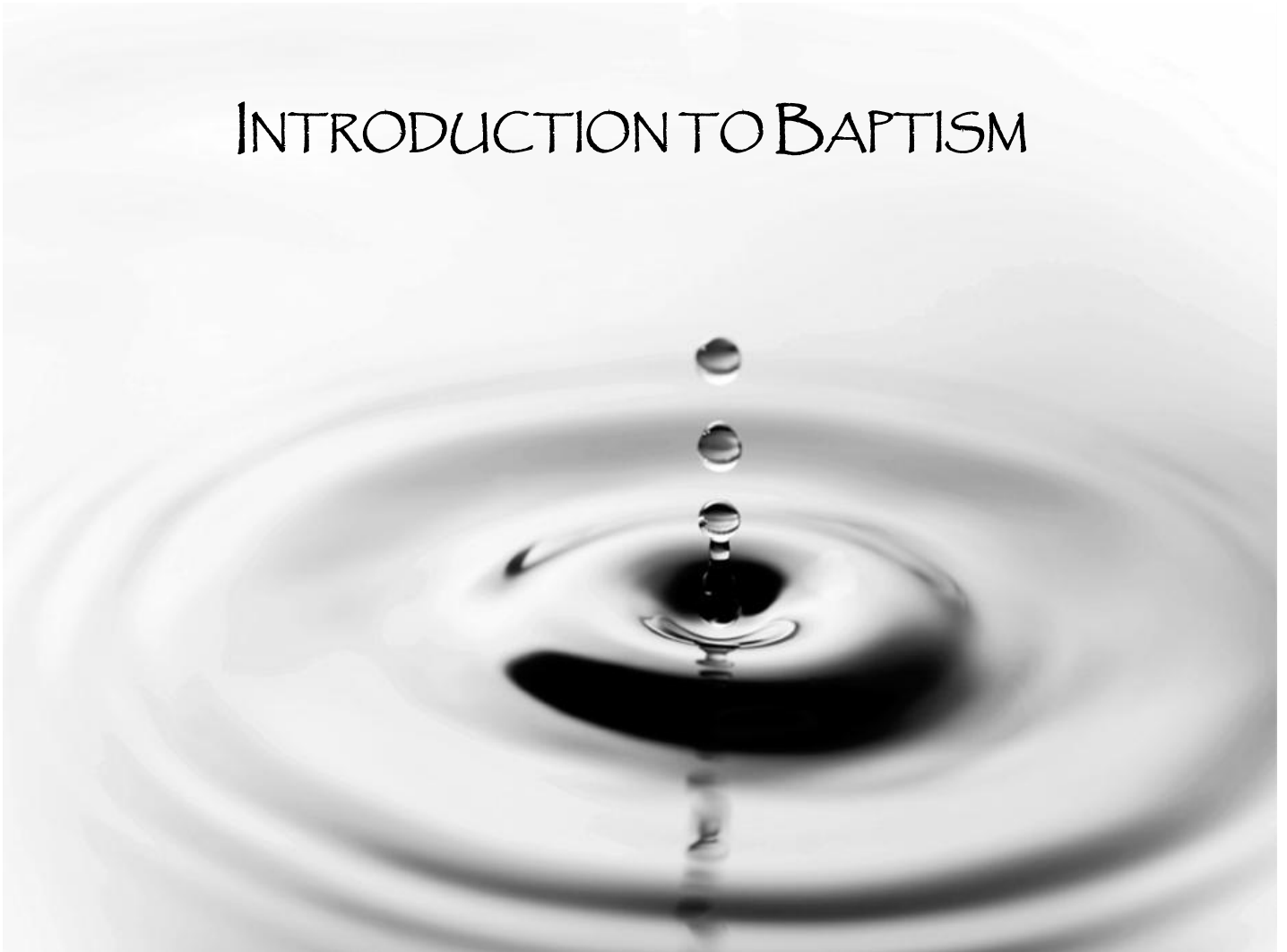


CBWC CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH

INTRODUCTION TO BAPTISM



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YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #1

Background to the Practice of Christian Baptism

Teacher's Preparation



Key points to make during this lesson

- Baptism existed before Jesus
- Baptism was used to clean/purify people
- Sometimes baptism functioned as an initiation rite
- Sometimes baptism was a sign of internal cleansing e.g. repentance
- Christian baptism is distinct from other baptism practices



Background Information

Ritual cleansing and purification rites as initiation into pagan cults or religions have been around forever. In Judaism (the religion of the Hebrew/Israelite people), there was a practice called '*Mikveh*'. The word *Mikveh* literally means 'a gathering, pooling or flowing' and was most often used in reference to water. The practices of *Mikveh* were widely used for a variety of purposes for ritual cleansing. Examples include women after their menstrual cycle, before marriage, or after giving birth. It was required of priests before entering the temple and eventually it was required of every man who wanted to enter prayer and study of the Torah. Ideally it was performed in a flowing stream or river. It would never be performed in water that was stagnant or standing still. Stone structures or pools for the ceremony were constructed but there had to be water flowing through from a stream source.

The earliest Biblical uses of the word *Mikveh* occur in 1 Kings 7:23ff. and its parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 4:2ff. These verses describe the huge, circular "Sea of Solomon," constructed along with the first temple for the priests to carry out their ceremonial washing.

There were always steps leading in and steps leading out of cleansing pools so that one would not be contaminated stepping on the same steps entering as leaving. The person was to have nothing between them and the water so the practice was performed naked. The person entered the pool alone, knelt down and submerged their entire body in a forward motion three times before a minimum of three witnesses.

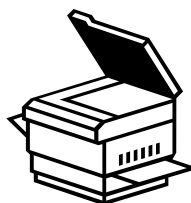
Purification rites were not only associated with physical cleansing. Certain Jewish groups at Jesus' time understood that the heart had to be right and the person "cleansed" internally

through **repentance**. When a person repented the ritual physical cleansing was used to represent the repentance. The Essenes were a sect of Judaism around the time of Jesus that was particularly critical of the way Pharisees and religious leaders were fastidious about physical cleansing, but corrupt within (Matt. 23: 2-28). The Essenes were trying to purify Judaism with practicing what was preached. They stressed repentance and true obedience to the Law of Moses. It is believed that John, the Baptizer was likely a member of the Essene community as they often gathered outside of cities in desert areas.

Another use of *Mikveh* was as an **initiation rite** into the Jewish faith. In order to become part of the Jewish faith, initially only circumcision was required. Later the ancient practice of *Mikveh* was also instituted as a requirement. Converts to Judaism from Gentile or pagan backgrounds had to participate in this cleansing ritual. In all, three steps were required to become Jewish: circumcision, baptism (*Mikveh*) and offering a sacrifice at the temple. Once a person had completed the three requirements, they were considered “reborn” or as a newborn. Their old life was over and a new life was begun.

At Jesus’ time the common language spoken across the ancient world was Greek. The equivalent of *Mikveh* in Greek is the Greek verb *baptidzo*, from which we get the English word ‘baptize’. *Baptidzo* or baptism carries the same meaning as the Hebrew (language of the OT) *taval*: to wash by dipping or plunging in water. Some consider it to literally mean “immersion” but there is much debate on this as it can also be used to refer to dipping a piece of bread in wine – a partial submersion.

Christian baptism (baptism in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit) draws on the traditions of baptism and *Mikveh* mentioned here but infuses the rite with new meaning. Jewish people today recognise the radical commitment of Christian baptism. There are Messianic Jews – those who want to follow Jesus as the Messiah but do not want to give up their Jewish heritage and faith. If they are baptized into the Christian church, their families believe that they have become Gentile and can never be Jewish again.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Computer, Internet Connection and TV/Projector (Optional – required if showing the Obama Inauguration YouTube Clip. This could be downloaded before the lesson, so the internet connection would not be required)
3. Printouts of the picture of the bath for ritual cleansing. (Optional)
4. Copies of the “Scripture References” handout
5. Pens

OUTLINE OF LESSON #1



Opening Activity:

Have you ever experienced an initiation activity to get into a club? Share some of those experiences or something you've seen or heard about elsewhere.

Have the kids share their own experiences. If your group is slow to share, have one or more examples of your own on hand to share. Some suggestions are:

1. YouTube Clip of inauguration of Barak Obama (a rite for joining the elite 'club' of US Presidents). [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3q89grM9cPE>]
2. In Avatar for Jake Sully to truly become one of the Na'avi he must complete many tasks. One of the last 'rite of passages' tasks he has to complete to become a warrior is to overpower a Mountain Banshee (a flying predator) and establish a neural bond between them.
3. Passing a Drivers' Test and receiving a licence is the entry into the group of people trusted to handle a vehicle on our roads
4. Sports' Teams Initiations - dressing up as movie characters, singing silly songs and drinking disgusting mixtures such as vinegar, soy sauce, peanut oil.



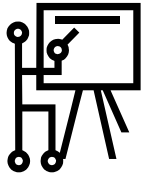
Read Scripture: Matthew 3: 1-12



Wondering Questions (to stimulate thoughts, not specific answers)

Why do you think people came from Jerusalem, Judea and all over the place to receive John's baptism?

Where do you think John came up with this crazy idea of getting Jewish people wet? Do you think he'd ever seen or experienced anything like that before?



Teaching Moment

(Teacher to draw from background info.) Actually, many religions used the act of washing or dipping as a way to initiate new followers, but Judaism in particular practiced many forms of ritual cleansing. Hands, feet or the whole body would be cleansed for different purposes. In order to become a Jewish convert, you had to be baptized. In order to perform certain priestly duties, one had to be ceremonially cleansed in front of witnesses. Baptism was a very common practice among Jews, but it was referred to by the term *Mikveh*.



This bath for ritual cleansing in the above picture was located to the south of the Temple close to the Huldah Gate.

[A JPEG version of this photo can be downloaded at <http://jesus-messiah.com/html/mikveh.html>]



*The Pharisees were all about ritual cleansing. Why did John call them ‘a brood of vipers’ – snakes when they came to him looking for baptism? **Have a student read Matt. 23: 27-28***

John’s baptism was to signify repentance. He warns the Pharisees and Sadducees because he does not see evidence of repentance in their lives (his words to them are ‘produce fruit in keeping with repentance’). Don’t just get baptised – show you have repented by living a changed life. They were hypocrites.



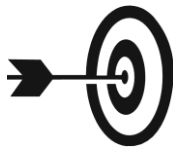
Who can describe a hypocrite for me?

Someone who says one thing, but does another. This is the way John and many others felt about the Pharisees and Jewish leaders of his time. They were so fussy about their rules, but they had lost their love for God and compassion for his people. They were all about how good they looked and how careful they followed all of the laws, but they lost sight of having a relationship with their Creator. John called the Jewish people to repent and be washed of empty religion and find belief once again.



What does baptism mean for Christians today?

Christian baptism is different from Mikveh, other OT cleansing rituals and even John’s baptism.



Provide teens with pens and copies of the handout. Give them time to look up the Scripture references and then go over the answers as a group accepting answers from the teens.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Look up what the following verses have to say about Christian baptism?

1. Matthew 28:19 (Who should get baptised and why?)
(Only disciples of Jesus because he has commanded his followers to be baptised)
2. Acts 2: 38
(Signifies repentance and is for the forgiveness of your sins)
3. Acts 22: 16
(Wash away your sins)

4. Romans 6:2-4
(Baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ)
5. 1 Corinthians 12: 13
(Belonging to the body of Christ)
6. Ephesians 4:4-6
(‘Into one faith, one Lord.’ It is not so easy for us to see, but to the original hearers this constituted a public declaration of your faith. Followers of Caesar performed certain rites, baptism was a public statement that Jesus is your king and you worship Him).
7. Colossians 2:12
(Identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus)



Making it Personal:

Some people find some of the symbolism of baptism more meaningful than others. Of the reasons given above, which would be the most meaningful reason for you if you were to be baptized, or if you have already been baptized?

In these verses salvation has not been mentioned. The connection between baptism and salvation is addressed in Lesson 3 and the Optional Extras Section.



Concluding thoughts:

Even though forms of washing and baptism existed long before Jesus came to earth, it seemed to be the heart of Jesus to transform the old and make it new. Jews had to repeat their ritual purifications many times for they were never clean “once and for all”. Some Jewish leaders were baptized every single day in order to enter the temple area or perform certain duties. John called people to repent and to show the purification of their hearts by receiving his baptism.

Jesus received John’s baptism and in the next lesson we will discuss why He did. But what we see is that Jesus transformed baptism and infused it with new meaning through His death and resurrection. Instead of needing to be washed over and over, Jesus became the final sacrifice for our sins and welcomed us permanently into God’s family. Baptism is not for God’s sake - that He gets a kick out of seeing a bunch of people get wet - but He offered us something tangible to experience so that we could remember that we’re forever forgiven - that we are welcomed forever into the family of God - that we can show others the decision we have made to follow Jesus in all things He taught and did. Baptism is a gift that God gives us to tangibly experience what He achieved for us in His Son’s death and resurrection.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Look up what the following verses have to say about Christian baptism?

1. Matthew 28:19 (Who should get baptised and why?)

2. Acts 2: 38

3. Acts 22: 16

4. Romans 6:2-4

5. 1 Corinthians 12: 13

6. Ephesians 4:4-6

7. Colossians 2:12

YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #2

Jesus' Baptism by John

Teacher's Preparation

Read Luke 1 and Matthew 3:13-17 to familiarize yourself with both the story of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus.



Key points to make during this lesson

- John was God's prophet who was to prepare the way for Jesus
- John baptised with water for repentance
- There was no need for repentance on the part of Jesus
- Jesus was inaugurating his kingdom ministry
- Jesus' baptism identified the beginning of His public ministry; His Messiahship (as affirmed by God); and His identification with the sinners He came to save.
- Jesus' baptism is an example and calling for believers to follow



Background Information

John as Prophet:

The Old Testament ends with the Book of Malachi. In it the Lord says that He will send a messenger, who will prepare the way for His coming (Malachi 3:1). It ends by saying that the prophet Elijah will come to the people and he will turn the hearts of the parents to the children and the children to their parents (Malachi 4:5,6). It had been over 400 years since Malachi delivered this message from the Lord and in that time the land of Israel had not heard from a prophet. The Lord had been silent.

Luke (1:17) makes it clear that John will be the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. John is to be the prophet, who comes in the power of Elijah, preparing the way for the Lord (Jesus). The Jewish people did not expect God to come in Jesus. They also did not expect 'one like Elijah' but rather Elijah himself. To this day when Jewish people celebrate the Feast of Passover they leave an empty seat and open the door so that Elijah may come in and join. Since Elijah did not die, but was taken up to heaven there is an anticipation that he himself will return.

The Hebrew people would have been well versed in their Scriptures, and the prophets often illustrated their message with their actions. The description we have of John reveals him to be a prophet and more than that the Elijah to be expected. John wears the same clothing (a leather belt and a garment of hair) which was characteristic of Elijah (2 Kings 1: 7-8). John went to the wilderness fulfilling the Isaiah 40:3 prophecy of a voice calling in the wilderness. He ate locusts – locusts were talked about by the prophet Joel. They represented the coming of the ‘Day of the Lord’ and the Lord’s judgement could only be averted through repentance. It is no coincidence that John’s message is ‘repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near’ (Matthew 3:2).

John’s whole purpose is to point to Jesus. The Lord has come and is among His people in the person of Jesus.

Why did Jesus come to John to be baptised?

Since Jesus had no need to be cleansed from sin, He came with a greater purpose. Jesus embodies righteousness through His perfect relationship with the Father and the Spirit. His baptism signifies His willingness to carry out the Trinity’s mission to reveal the Kingdom of God. Jesus chose His baptism to inaugurate His message and ministry of salvation. In keeping with the Jewish practice of baptising men at the age of 30 into the priesthood, (Luke 3:23) Jesus fulfills the law of initiation into His priestly ministry. In the act of baptism, God the Father and God the Spirit bear witness to the Son’s calling and pour out their blessings, affirming that this is the will of the Trinity.

By submitting to the baptism of John, Jesus affirms John message and call for changed lives. Jesus identifies with us in our sinful state and leads us forward into restoring our relationship with God’s desires for us through baptism.

In baptism, we acknowledge our broken relationship with God and humble ourselves to follow His call on our lives, rather than our own. Thus we join Christ in carrying out the Trinity’s mission to reveal the Kingdom of God.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Crickets and honey (Optional – required if using opening activity #1)
3. Copies of the handout (Optional – required if doing opening activity #2).
4. Pens

OUTLINE OF LESSON #2



Recap

What did we talk about last week?

Baptism:

- Baptism (*Mikveh*) existed before Jesus
- Baptism was a ritual cleansing
- Sometimes baptism signified repentance, as did John's baptism.
- Christian baptism is distinct from other baptisms

John the Baptist baptised one very important person. Today we're going to take a closer look at John the Baptist and what he did.



Set the Scene

Read the story of John the Baptist

Luke 1: 5-25; 39-45; 57-80. Luke 7:24-28. Matthew 3:1-12



Opening Activity

Option #1 (for the brave)

Bring in honey and crickets (found in pet stores and the equivalent of locusts) and have a snack

OR

Bring one cricket and have one person eat it.

How would you feel if all you had to eat was crickets and honey?

Option #2

See who can get most questions correct on the True/False Crazy Prophetic Behaviours Quiz. If the teens guess that all the answers are true and are good at Bible knowledge, see if they can guess which prophet was asked to do each action.

There are various ways to do this activity:

- a) Provide the teens with pens and copies of the handout. Have them circle their answers.

- b) If you have an active group, you can choose the left of the room to be 'TRUE' and the right to be 'FALSE'. The teens stand in the middle of the room (returning there after each question). Once you read the question the teens have to pick a side. If they think the statement is 'TRUE' they go to the left and if they think it is 'FALSE' they go to the right.

CRAZY PROPHETIC BEHAVIOURS QUIZ

Answer TRUE or FALSE to each of the following twelve statements.

God asked one of His prophets to:

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Eat a scroll
(Ezekiel 3:1) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 2. Marry a promiscuous wife
(Hosea 1:2) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 3. Not to mourn for a dead wife
(Ezekiel 24:16) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 4. Not to marry at all or have children
(Jeremiah 16:2) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 5. Shave his head and beard
(Ezekiel 5:1) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 6. Buy a field
(Jeremiah 32:7) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 7. Bake food using human excrement for fuel
(Ezekiel 4:12 – God later compromised on animal dung!) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 8. Go about naked for three years
(Isaiah 20:1-6) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 9. Lie on his left side for 390 days without turning over, then to lie on his right for 40 days.
(Ezekiel 4:4-8) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 10. Confront the king about his adulterous and murderous actions
(Nathan to King David in 2 Samuel 12) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 11. Heal the commander of a foreign army of leprosy
(Elisha and Naaman in 2 Kings 5) | TRUE / FALSE |
| 12. Go to and preach against the capital city of essentially the world's superpower
(Jonah and Nineveh in Assyria) | TRUE / FALSE |



Transition

Why are we told that John wore a leather belt and camel hair; that he ate locusts and wild honey; and went about in the wilderness?

(Shows that he was a prophet)

What was John's message?

(To point to Jesus as the Messiah)



Read Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17



Discussion starters

What was John's baptism for?

(Repentance - Matt. 3:11)

Why was John hesitant to baptize Jesus?

(Jesus was without sin and had no need to repent - Matt 3:13-15)

Why does Jesus say it is necessary for him to be baptised?

(To fulfil all righteousness)

What does this mean?

(Would indicate the start of his ministry/mission, which is to bring all people into right relationship with God)

What happened when Jesus came out of the water? (the Trinity are all mentioned)

(Affirmed as God's Son, not just the Messiah, but Immanuel (God with us) - Matt 3:16-17)

Why was God pleased?

(Jesus was being obedient and carrying out his Mission)

Why then do we get baptised?

(To identify with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection).



Make it personal

What is it about Jesus' baptism that would inspire you towards baptism? Is there any thing that would make you hesitate to be baptised?

CRAZY PROPHETIC BEHAVIOURS QUIZ

Answer TRUE or FALSE to each of the following twelve statements.

God asked one of His prophets to:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Eat a scroll | TRUE / FALSE |
| 2. Marry a promiscuous wife | TRUE / FALSE |
| 3. Not to mourn for a dead wife | TRUE / FALSE |
| 4. Not to marry at all or have children | TRUE / FALSE |
| 5. Shave his head and beard | TRUE / FALSE |
| 6. Buy a field | TRUE / FALSE |
| 7. Bake food using human excrement for fuel | TRUE / FALSE |
| 8. Go about naked for three years | TRUE / FALSE |
| 9. Lie on his left side for 390 days without turning over, then to lie on his right for 40 days. | TRUE / FALSE |
| 10. Confront the king about his adulterous and murderous actions | TRUE / FALSE |
| 11. Heal the commander of a foreign army of leprosy | TRUE / FALSE |
| 12. Go to and preach against the capital city of essentially the world's superpower | TRUE / FALSE |

YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #3

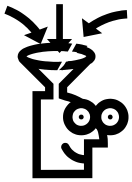
Baptism and Conversion – Becoming Part of God’s Story

Teacher’s Preparation



Key points to make during this lesson

- Baptism signifies that you believe Jesus is God and you have given control of your life over to Him
- Jesus is at the centre of God’s story
- Jesus came to restore the relationships shattered in the Fall (with God, with others, with ourselves and with creation)
- We can become participants with God in His story only through Jesus
- Baptism functions as an initiation ceremony marking our inclusion in the people and mission of God.



Background Information

In Lesson 2 we learned about Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist. Jesus’ baptism marked the beginning of His public ministry and identified Him as God’s chosen one. By wilfully undergoing John’s baptism, Jesus by an act of submission showed that He was in agreement with God’s plan and His purposes. Jesus accepted and owned the divine mission set before Him.

As disciples of Jesus we are invited to follow Jesus into the water. When we follow Jesus in obedience to be baptized we too say “Yes” to the mission, plan and purposes of God. We wilfully surrender our lives to participating in the divine agenda. But what is this divine agenda? Here we must grasp the larger story – God’s story – that we are entering into.

Overview of the Biblical Story



The Hebrew people were not linear thinkers like we in the West are today. Whereas the climax of our stories appears just before the end of the book, for the Hebrews (and even for other Middle Eastern cultures today) the focal point of their stories occurs in the middle. One of the literary tools that Hebrew authors use to emphasise their main point is to use a chiasmic structure. A chiasm or chiasmic structure is named after the Greek letter *Chi* (X), because the structure looks like the left of the 'X'. The beginning of the story (A) mirrors the end of the story (A'). The only part of the story without a mirror is the centre and this is where the author's main message lies. Many Biblical books and poems are arranged according to this structure, and the record of God's action in history also reflects it:

Chiasmic Structure of God's Story Showing Jesus as The Centre ie the Main Point of the Story:

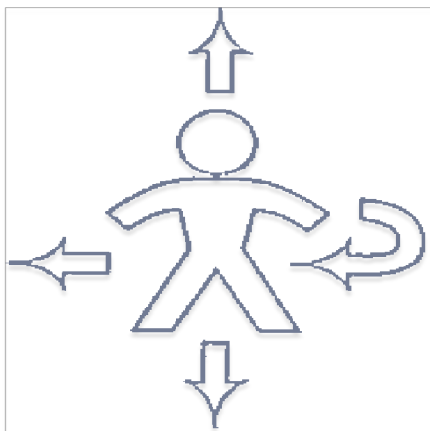
A – Creation
B – Fall
C – People of God (Israelites)
D – Jesus (Birth, Life, Death & Resurrection)
C' – People of God (Church)
B' – You
A' – (Re)New(ed) Creation

A/A' [Green Sheet] We see that God's Story is bookended by creation which is really an idyllic picture of 'the way life is' or at least the way God intended it to be so that we could live our most human lives. We know the world is not as it should be and that we are far from perfect.

Creation says that God created out of nothing. The Hebrew word for 'formless and void' (Gen. 1:2) is actually *tohu vabohu*, best translated as *chaos*. The action of creation then, was God stepping into this watery chaos and bringing order. We are usually taught that once God created, there was no more chaos until Adam and Eve sinned – but then we have questions like, where did the serpent come from? Not to mention other tricky questions about the first part of scripture.

B [Speckled Sheet] What is more likely to have occurred is that God pushed back the chaos and set an ordered bit of paradise in the midst of it. We are further convinced of this when God tells Cain to beware, "Sin is crouching at your door waiting for an opportunity to attack" (Gen 4:7). It seems to make sense that chaos is a reality of life without God; that chaos existed in the period prior to Genesis 1. As the Bible "raises the curtain" on the creation story, God spoke order into that chaos. Adam and Eve had the chance to live in paradise but the lure of autonomy, lies and chaos shattered their trust in God.

D [Red Sheet] This brokenness/chaos/the Fall/ is the very reason why Jesus is at the centre of God's Story. It is only through Jesus that our relationship with God can be restored, that chaos can be pushed back so that we can take our places in the (Re)New(ed) Creation. Jesus shows us through his story (birth life, death and resurrection) how to counteract what took place during the fall (Gen 3).



The image here represents the four relationships that were shattered in the fall. Our relationship

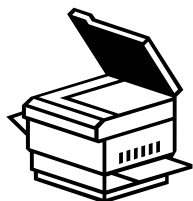
1. With God (Gen 3: 7,8);
2. with others (Gen 3:12),
3. with self (Gen 3:10) and,
4. with creation/earth (Gen 3:17).

The fact that God's story moves toward the renewal of all things and a restoration of both heaven and earth (Rev 21:1-4) implies that we, too, must be about restoring what was

shattered and broken in the fall. The fall reminds us why this work needs to be done; the perfect creation was shattered and so there is much to be put back together.

B' [2nd Speckled sheet] We are part of God's story simply by having been born. We have a choice as to what our role in that story looks like. We can continue to perpetuate the brokenness, or we can become partners with God in pushing back the chaos and reconciling the world to God. We become co-workers with God in His story when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Remember Lesson 1 and the Obama inauguration clip/Avatar/Driver's Licence/ or other initiation rite? Christian Baptism functions like an initiation rite. It is a ceremony to mark our inclusion in God's People [Blue sheet – see lesson 4] because we are turning from our old ways to follow Jesus' Way. It is a declaration that life as we know it is not how God intended it to be and that we will turn from seeking autonomy, to living within God's order.

Jesus is the only way to the Father; He is at the centre of God's Story because it is only through Jesus that we can be reconciled to God.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Sheets of green, speckled and blue paper (one sheet for each student).
3. Sheets of red paper. (Half a sheet for each student).
4. Scissors
5. Stapler/staples
6. Pencils/Colouring Pens

OUTLINE OF LESSON #3



Recap

For the past couple of weeks we've been talking about baptism. At the end of last week's session we talked about things that make people hesitant to be baptised. Today we will look at the story of a Pakistani Christian who is still alive today.



Opening Activity

Read, or have students read out loud the story of Gulshan Esther included at the end of this lesson.



Discussion Questions

What did Gulshan's family understand her baptism to mean?

Her conversion to Christianity. That she was claiming Jesus was God.

Do you think people who are half-hearted about following Jesus get baptised in Muslim countries?

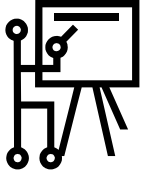
In Islamic (Muslim) countries the significance of baptism is taken so seriously that you can be put to death simply for having been baptised. When faced with such danger, only those committed to following Jesus would risk being baptised. Under Sharia (Muslim) law a family has the right to kill a relative who brings shame on the family. Although Pakistan is a more moderate Muslim country and is not under Sharia law some Muslim families still carry out so-called honour killings. An honour killing was even carried out recently in the UK, though those responsible were charged under the UK Criminal Code.



Transition:

Baptism is a serious step of faith. It signifies that you believe Jesus is God and that you are giving control of your life over to Him.

When Jesus was baptised He showed that He was in agreement with God's plan and purposes. When we follow Jesus in obedience to be baptized we too surrender our lives to participating in the divine agenda. But what is this divine agenda? To know it, we must know God's story.



Teaching Moment and Activity

Explain God's story to the teens using as much or as little detail from the 'Background' section of the Teacher's Preparation. Have the students create a booklet to help them remember the chiastic structure of God's Story and the central importance of Jesus.

Place one green sheet on the table, then a speckled sheet on top of the green, then a blue on top of the speckled. Fold in half to make a booklet. Insert a half red sheet in the middle of the booklet and staple the sheets together down the left-hand side. In the end each student should have a booklet consisting of:

- a green front cover (representing creation),
- followed by a speckled sheet (the Fall),
- then a blue sheet (the Israelites became the people of God by passing through the waters of the Red Sea);
- a central red sheet (Jesus, his birth, life, death and resurrection showing the Way)
- a second blue sheet (the church – God's people who have passed through the waters of baptism)
- another speckled sheet (represents us – sinners in need of Christ's cleansing)
- a green back cover (representing the (Re)New(ed) Creation)

Note: The speckled 'You' page can go either way depending on our decision. It can become pure and clean (white) in Jesus, and as such your story is yet to be written; or it can become dark given over to sin and chaos. The booklets can be left blank or the students can illustrate them.



Conclusion:

End by sharing your own personal story of conversion and invite any youth that might want to share their personal story.

The Story of Gulshan Esther – How a Muslim Woman From Pakistan Met Jesus¹

Gulshan was born into a respected Muslim family in Pakistan – the Sayeds, who were directly descended from the prophet Mohammed. When Gulshan was 6 months old she took ill with typhoid fever, which developed into polio. The polio left her paralysed on the left side of her body and the muscles and skin withered and wasted on her left arm and leg. Her family tried everything to have her cured, including a visit to a specialist in England. The doctor said there was no medicine that could help her condition and that her only hope was prayer. Following her visit to England, Gulshan's father took her on pilgrimage to Mecca, where they expected the God they submitted to, to miraculously cure her. She did not receive a miracle in Mecca and remained paralysed. Having never walked, she returned to Pakistan with her two maids who had to help her to do everything - to wash, dress, stand, sit, eat and pray. She was dependent on them 24hrs a day.

When she was about 16 her father died. The night after he passed away she heard the voice of Jesus in her room. It told her to read about Him in the Quran. So she did. There it told of how Jesus had given sight to the blind and healed lepers. So she recognised him as a healer and prayed to Him to heal her. She prayed and reread everything the Quran had to say about Jesus for 3 years. One night, on the 8th January 1971, in desperation she cried out to Jesus, 'If you are able to, heal me – otherwise tell me.' Then He appeared to her in her room, He healed her and told her to stand up. She did. He taught her how to pray and commissioned her to be His witness. She was delighted, and her family were delighted for her – that is until she wouldn't stop telling people that Jesus was the one who healed her. They warned her not to talk about Jesus, and to tell others God or Mohammed had cured her. However, she had met Jesus and she was to be His witness - she couldn't deny what He had done for her, or say it was someone else. She found out that followers of Jesus read the Bible, so with much difficulty she got an Urdu Bible from some Christians and smuggled it into the house to read at night. Christians in Pakistan did not have a habit of giving Bibles to Muslims as it was dangerous for the Muslim:

That night I started to read my New Testament secretly. In the course of my reading I came to passages concerning baptism. I read in Mark 1:9-11 that Jesus was baptised. In Romans 6:4 I read: 'Just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so Christ was raised to newness of life.'

Newness of life. That was what it felt like to me – as if I had been immersed in fresh, rushing springs of water, bringing tingling life to every part of my being. So this baptism was a sign and seal on that experience.

As I was musing on this a picture came before me, of a young, sad girl sitting on a stool while her maids poured the water of the spring of Zamzam over her. Zamzam, [the water considered holy by Muslims], the water of life, had not washed away my sins nor had it brought life to my dead flesh. Jesus had given me spiritual water of life for my stricken body and my soul. Now I

¹ ***The Torn Veil*** by Gulshan Esther, © 1984 by Sister Gulshan Esther and Thelma Sangster. Used by permission of CLC Publications. May not be further reproduced. All rights reserved.

wanted to be buried with him in baptism. I thought about it, not entirely grasping the full force of what I was contemplating, and what changes it would make in my life.

I went to the Christians who had given me the New Testament. I showed them the scriptures I had found. 'There' I said, 'this tells me I must be baptised. Please will you baptise me with water?'

He shook his head. 'My daughter we don't baptise in our denomination.' He was a Major in the Salvation Army. The Major looked at me with a strange expression. 'Do you realise what may happen if you do this – you may never be able to return home again. Your family may even try to kill you – oh yes, even as loving a family as yours can change completely when they see one of their number leaving the Muslim faith.'

I said firmly, so they would be in no doubt as to my resolution: 'Jesus Immanuel has told me that I must be His witness, and baptism is the next step for me. I must obey or I will forfeit this peace I now have. Better to die with Christ than live without Him.'

The man exchanged glances with his wife and she gave a slight nod. He turned back to me: 'So be it then. If Jesus has spoken so clearly to you then you must not go against His will.'

The Major and his wife arranged for Gulshan to be baptised in the city of Lahore. She laid her plans – she would have to leave home without her family knowing what she was planning. If it was discovered they would prevent her baptism. She thought she could go through with the baptism and then return home. The other Christians, who had experience in these matters thought differently:

'Don't bring any money and don't bring any jewellery. If you do, it is possible that after the baptism someone may sue the Christians.' The Major spoke gravely, and I looked at him, interpreting his meaning correctly. He was talking about a clean break, as if I would have to leave everything behind me. Everything? – Money, jewellery, house, lands, family love and support? Could Jesus really want this of me? Had he given me this gift of healing only to withdraw everything else that made life dear?

Gulshan left her money and jewellery behind. Without telling anyone what she was planning she went to stay with a minister in Lahore and live among Christian people.

I was in that house for five weeks before my baptism. When I asked the Rev Khan about the delay he said, 'Oh, I have arrangements to make.' I realised later that he wanted to observe me for a while, to make sure that I was serious about being baptised. It wouldn't have been good to take this step and then go back from it. But I grew agitated for fear of discovery.

At last the day of my baptism came, April 23rd. This took place in a room in the house in which there was a tank for this kind of event. The minister performed the ceremony, which was simple and perfect. As he immersed me in the tank I felt I was leaving the old Gulshan

down there on the bottom, with her old ways of thinking and her old desires and a new Gulshan was emerging, 'buried with him in baptism and raised to newness of life.'

That new life surged through me and I longed to witness to it. Those elders who were present gave me a new name: Gulshan Esther

Soon after I phoned my younger brother, Alim Shah, and I told him: 'I thought you should know that I have become a Christian in earnest, and now I am working at the School for Blind Children in Lahore.' There was a gasp at the other end of the line: 'What is this that you have done?' said Alim Shah. 'Come, return home and forget all about this.'

'Now that I have found the way, the truth and the life how can I forget all about it?'

He said: 'Have you gone quite mad? If you keep on saying this to me my door will be shut to you for ever. As far as I am concerned you are dead.'

'All right, you tell me this: how can I leave the truth and come back to you? I cannot do this at any cost.'

His tone was grim and even: 'I see. In that case my door is shut. You are dead! I never want to see your face again and you will never see mine.'

I wrote to my aunt and uncle and also to my older brother Safdar Shah telling them I'd become a Christian. I received a letter from Safdar Shah. I had been waiting for it, with a feeling of dread. He wrote, 'my brother has told me about your becoming a Christian, and believing in Jesus as God's Son. This is not right for our family or our religion. I suggest that as soon as you read this letter you come back to my house and listen to my advice. As you know I have the deeds to all the property which is in your name. It cannot be given to a Christian who has been the daughter of a Sayed. If you do not leave Christianity I will leave no stone unturned to get you back. My religion allows me to kill a sister who has become a Christian – and still go into Paradise.' This letter upset me very much.

Gulshan's baptism had resulted in her family cutting off all contact with her.

Gulshan worked at the School for the Blind for over 2 years without hearing from anyone in her family. Then one November her sister's husband came to tell her that her sister Anis was seriously ill. Anis was about to die and was asking for Gulshan, so Gulshan went with her brother-in-law to see her sister. Anis was miraculously restored to life by Jesus, as a result of Gulshan's prayers and Gulshan ended up staying in Anis' home for a time.

One day Anis questioned me about my baptism, and listened carefully to my explanation of its meaning. I told her, 'It is important that you be buried with Christ in baptism if you really want life. When we are baptised we are cleansed in body, mind and soul and we become his people.'

Then she said, 'I want to be baptised, since I am a Christian now. I have changed in my heart and I want to go a step further.'

My delight was mingled with alarm. It had cost me a great deal to be baptised. Did she really understand what price she would have to pay for this act?

But Anis insisted. 'It will hurt me if I am not baptised,' she said, 'I will not be a Muslim and I will not be a Christian. I will be outside,' she told me firmly. But I saw at once that to seek the aid of a Christian minister would be to invite disaster – from her husband's family, if from no one else. Anis wanted me to baptise her, but I said I could not, as I wasn't a Christian minister. Anis asked if I would do it if I received permission from Jesus. What right had I to refuse to help her? So we prayed to Jesus and He gave me permission. I would have to perform the ceremony myself.

One afternoon we asked the maid to fill the deep cemented tub with tepid water and lay out some towels and clean clothes. Then we dismissed her. I saw her curious dark eyes linger on us as we closed the bathroom door.

I stood with Anis in the water and asked her if she would confess to belief in Christ. She said, 'Now I bury my old self and am new in Jesus, and I shall be faithful.'

Then I immersed her in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and committed her to God's keeping. It was a moment of triumph. Afterwards Anis told me that when she prayed she was lifted up as if on angels' wings and saw in a vision people standing around and glorifying Jesus.

My brother-in-law heard about the baptism and he questioned my sister about what we had been doing. Anis looked scared, 'He asked me about it last night, and I told him what the baptism meant. Now he is angry. He does not like or understand all this about the cross. I cannot explain it. I think he is looking for a chance to have an argument with you. Please try not to upset him, or he will make you go.'

Then we learned that Anis' husband had to move for a time, in the interests of his business.

'We all have to go too' said Anis. 'And we have to stay with our younger brother Alim Shah.'

I was dismayed at this news but I agreed to go with them. We would see how our brother would take my arrival.

'I am so pleased to see you. You are very welcome to my house.' It was my brother Alim Shah speaking. I could not believe my ears. It was as if the bitter conversation on the phone had never happened. I thanked him warmly, but underneath there was a sense of disquiet. It was all too good to be true.

Four months later, in November 1974, Alim came into my room. 'I hope you're happy here in my home' he said in the kindest tone imaginable.

'I'm very happy here,' I said, sincerely meaning it.

'We love you very much...I want you to come on holiday with me. All I want from you is this book. Give me the Bible and I will take it back to the Bible Society depot so that you can't read it again. And give up going to church and I'll give you whatever you want.'

'This is the word of God and it tells me the difference between right and wrong. I won't give it to you...this is a part of my life.' I could see he was getting angry. 'I can't stop going to church' I said.

He jumped up. He threw my Bible at me. 'Before the sunrise, leave my home, I don't want to see you again.'

No one else came near me that night. I lay down with a heavy heart. Next morning there was a crossness in the air. Alim's wife didn't address one word to me. My brother was nowhere to be seen. There was no word from Anis or her husband. The servant just left the breakfast and went quietly out.

Sadly I packed my bag with four or five dresses made for me by Anis. I left my fine clothes given me by Alim Shah, because he'd said, 'Don't take anything out of this house.'

My case was in the corridor and I was going towards it, when I saw Safdar Shah coming. I hadn't seen him in over three years since I'd left the family home, but the words of happy recognition died on my lips when I saw his face and what he carried. It was a gun. A shot gun.

He got hold of me by the wrist and pulled me downstairs to the basement of the house. 'Sit there and don't move!' he commanded me. I obeyed. Safdar Shah could, when roused, be cruel. He went to call Alim Shah. There was a deathly silence in the house, the scent of fear.

My brothers came downstairs, their faces hard and set. My heart was pounding and my legs felt like straws, but I remained seated on a sofa, trying to stay calm.

My brothers sat opposite me, on the other side of the table. I tried to look into their hate-filled eyes, but they were looking inward as if not conscious of my gaze. My elder brother said to me:

'I will kill you because you are a Christian. If you deny Jesus' name and come back to Islam I won't kill you.

The power of the Holy Spirit came on me. I said, 'If you don't shoot me, will you give me a guarantee that I won't die from an illness or an accident. It is written in the Quran and the Bible that once a person is born he has to die. I will not deny Jesus. So, go ahead, shoot. I don't mind dying in the name of Christ. In my Bible it is written, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." You can kill my body, but you can't kill my spirit. In the name of Jesus I live forever.' My brother grasped the handle of the double-barrelled shot-gun and slowly brought it round to point at my head. Then he tried to kill me. I closed my eyes. I got ready for my death. For half an hour I waited, but the gun would not work on me. The bullet would not come out of it. My brother was very angry with the gun and with me.

He grabbed my hand to throw me out of the house. They pushed me ahead of them up the stairs. I picked up my bag in the hall and went out of the door.

The older Christians had been right. Being baptised into Jesus meant Gulshan had had to leave everything behind her – home, money, clothes, jewellery, her inheritance of property and land, and her family including the protection, love and support that they provided in a Muslim nation. This is what it cost Gulshan Esther to follow Jesus, but she had met Him and could not deny Him. After this she continued to faithfully witness to Jesus and His power continues to be evident in her life even to this day.

YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #4

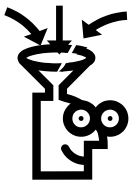
Baptism and Discipleship

Teacher's Preparation



Key points to make during this lesson

- the role of the Holy Spirit (power/miracle);
- as followers of Christ we are icons and agents of God's transformation in the world
- transforming the world and revealing the Kingdom of God is achieved partly by our participation in the community of faith



Background Information

In Lesson 3 we looked at how baptism functions as an initiation rite into God's Story/people for a convert to Christ. When we give leadership of our lives to God through the waters of baptism we proclaim that we want to be part of His story – of this new 'Way' of living. There is so much more to following Jesus than simply accepting a list of beliefs – we need to be ready to change our behaviours and live what we believe as well. Both right thinking (orthodoxy) as well as right living (orthopraxy) are important.

Jesus Himself provides the example for us to follow. Following His own baptism by John, Jesus began a public ministry in which He proclaimed, lived and taught the Kingdom of God. Luke 3:21-23 speaks of Jesus' Baptism in direct connection to the ministry He carried out, and Luke specifically notes that Jesus was 30 when his baptism took place – the age at which priests were admitted into the priesthood. From this we know that Jesus' baptism functioned as His 'anointing' to ministry and the beginning of His 'official' priestly role, though as we are told by the author of Hebrews, Jesus was a priest in the order of Melchizedek, not Levi (Hebrews 7:17).

Remember our booklets from last week? How they had a green outside cover? Our story is bookended by creation. This reminds us of the importance of stewarding our world well and learning how to live our story in this context here and now. Faith is not some 'pie in the sky when you die.' God's Story tells us that His creation was and will be the ultimate environment for us to be truly human. God's Story is moving toward the renewal of all things. Romans 8:19-22 tells us creation is waiting to be brought into the freedom of the children of God, it is groaning, as in the pains of childbirth, waiting for its new birth/renewal.

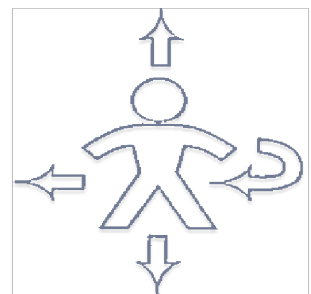
The Fall reminds us why renewal is necessary – the perfect creation was shattered and there is much to be put back together. God is love – the Trinity is a community best described by love

and God calls communities of people to love one another, because it is in loving one another that we best reveal God to the world (John 15:12). God invites people to participate in His plan - we are His agents of grace in a broken world. Before Christ, God called the people of Israel to be a community set apart from others to declare to the world an alternate way to be human under the direction of God. After Christ, God calls the church to be a distinct community revealing to others the Kingdom of God.

The church has a special role in God's story. 1 Peter 2:9 calls the church 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.' Ephesians 3:10 says, 'God's intent was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.' 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20 says, 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.' What an amazing responsibility and opportunity we have - we are God's representatives and He has placed His message and Jesus' mission in our hands.

Take out the booklet from the previous lesson. The first page is creation. What we are told in the creation story is that "God created humanity on God's own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). In the Ancient Near East (time of the Bible) the phrase "in the image of God" was actually used in reference to the King who was also viewed as a god. They also had a ceremony whereby they would place the divinity of the king onto a statue that was carved to look like the king - in the king's likeness. In this ceremony the king (god) would blow on the nostrils of the statue at which point the statue also become divine. So when our creation story (green page) talks about God creating humanity and breathing into our nostrils - there is so much more going on than we normally understand. In addition to us becoming living beings we also were made representatives of God at that moment.

Take a look at your computer screen. There are icons all over. Each icon represents something much more than what you see. Perhaps it is a word document or an entire program. That is what we are like with God. Our life becomes an icon of the bigger story. People can look to us and catch a glimpse of what God is like - this glimpse becomes even clearer as we gather in community. Paul used a similar reference when he described us as being "living letters read by all men" (2 Corinthians. 3:2).



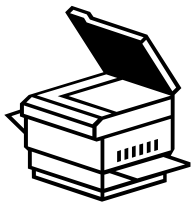
Is it possible that God believes in us much more than we believe in ourselves? We were made to be the image bearers of God. We are the true icons – the shortcut to who God is. It was in Antioch that followers of Jesus were first called Christians - little Christs. We are to reveal Christ to the world and we are to do it in community.

We are God's witnesses and He has not left us devoid of help. He gives us His Holy Spirit, to enable us to take Jesus' message to the corners of the globe (and even to the sometimes scarier mission fields of our schools, homes and workplaces). We are promised the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8. The word 'power' in this verse, in the original Greek is *dunamis*, which carries the double meaning 'miracle' – it is no small power we receive in the Holy Spirit, it is the power/miracle that came upon Mary so that she would give birth to Jesus, it is the power/miracle that raised Jesus from the dead.

Following our baptisms, the person baptising us will lay hands on us and commission us to be witnesses for Christ. Baptism is the start of sharing our story of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus we are to proclaim, live and teach the Kingdom of God. In effect we embody the prayer we have all been taught to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." We become the arms and feet of Jesus, by which He brings His Kingdom to the world.

Jesus called Himself 'the light of the world' and He came into the darkness of the world. Light is a metaphor for the church, as we continue Christ's mission. We are to bring Jesus – let Him shine through us into the dark places of this world. We only carry that light when we are connected to God (see also John 15) – when we are accessing the power/miracle of God. Darkness cannot be measured on its own – it is not an absolute. Darkness is only an absence of light. Darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. Light drives out darkness. The degree of darkness depends on how brightly a light shines.

The important aspect of this lesson will be to help your students see that their passions and concerns are perhaps the seeds of restoring a small part of its brokenness into the beauty God intended. This commitment to redemption, restoration, renewal is the heart of the Big Story of God. Often, our place in God's story is defined by what He has created us to be good at, passionate about, etc.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Your copy of 'God's Story' booklet from last week.
3. Copies of the Handout (Double-sided)
4. Pencils/Colouring Pens
5. Copy of the Icon Printout
6. PP3 battery, connecting leads, crocodile clips, switch and bulb if you are scientifically minded and want to make a practical circuit – optional.

OUTLINE OF LESSON #4



Recap

Remind the teens of the booklets they made last week. If we say 'YES' to God and become part of his church through baptism then we are included in the blue page at the back of the book – God's people.

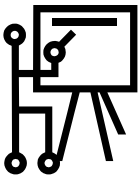
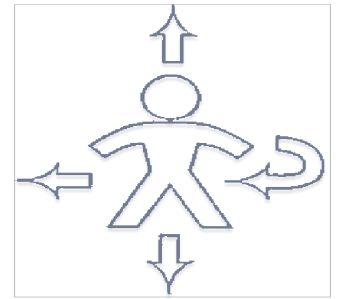


Opening Activity

Show the teens the icon on the right. Discuss the Ancient Near East story of us being made in the image of God.

Remind students what the arrows represent (from last lesson)

When we step into the water of baptism we say YES to restoring all four arrows.



Teaching Moment

The true representation of Jesus today is us. We are God's ambassadors. We have been created in the image of God. It is as if God has given us a song, and we have to play it. Bach was a great composer, but if the notes were left on the page, no one would ever hear his music. God has given us a mission, he has written a composition, but we must bring that song to life and reveal Jesus to the world around us. What instrument do you play in the composition of God? What are you adding to the beauty of this song? When you think about being the hands and feet of God what comes to your mind?



Discussion Questions

Do you feel pressure to reflect and represent God accurately?

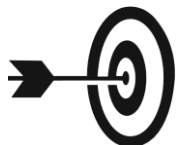
Do you point to God with your life?

What instrument are you? How do you bring God's song to life?



Transition:

Today we read the Bible as individuals and think it is our responsibility to reflect God on our own. While we do have an individual responsibility, it is only in community that we truly reflect God, because God is love and God Himself exists in the community of the Trinity.



Provide teens with pens and copies of the handout. Give them time to look up the Scripture references and then go over the answers as a group accepting answers from the teens.

THE MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

It is the church, the community of believers that is to reflect God. Look up and write out the following verses to see the special role the church has in God's story:

1 Peter 2:9, 10

Ephesians 3:10

2 Corinthians 5:19, 20

Acts 1:8

Matthew 5:14-16

How would you draw the Mission of the church? (Everything goes out from the cross of Jesus.)

DEVELOPING THE IDEA OF MISSION

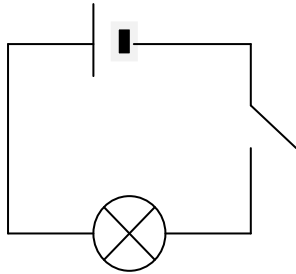
Think about light as a metaphor for the church. To receive light from a light bulb:

A light bulb must be Plugged In.

Witnessing is being Plugged In and allowing the miracle of God to shine through you.

You do this by connecting with God (the battery/power source); living in community (the connecting leads); and doing that thing that makes you come alive (the switch)...whatever your thing is.

Draw a circuit to show how you shine God's light in the world. [Scientific students can draw circuit diagrams; artistic students can draw picture representations. If you are adventurous, you can bring the parts and construct a physical circuit yourself].



With this picture of the church (as a light to the world) in mind, where are the dark places of the world into which we should shine our light?

God wants us to shine in those dark places. How well are we doing?

What are some of the ways we can shine our light and share God's message of reconciliation?

How does being plugged in to a community of believers help us to shine our light?

Closing Activity: Identifying our passions

"Do not ask what the world needs. Instead, ask what makes you come alive. Because what the world needs is more people who have come alive." --Thurmond Whitman

What is the one thing that is wrong with the world?

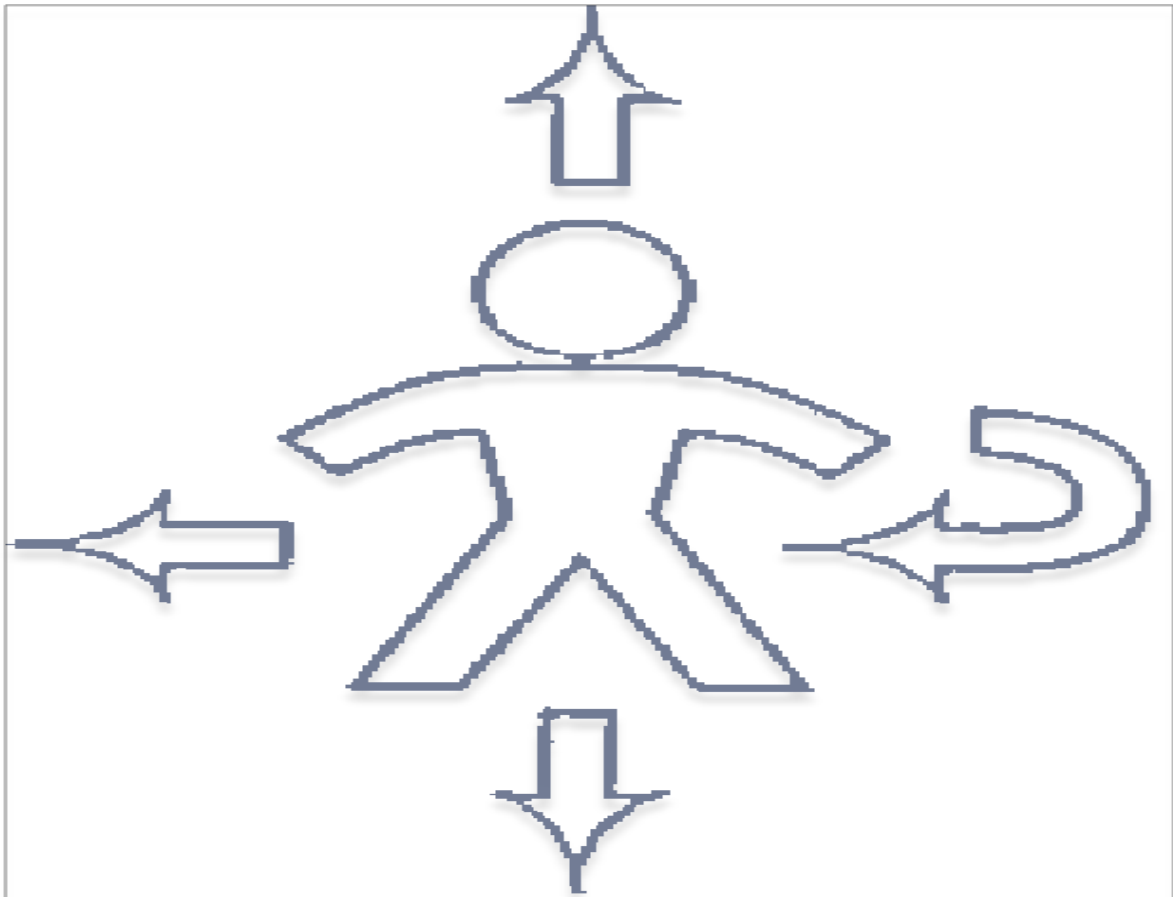
How do you fix it?



Conclusion

Have the students ponder these questions for a while. The answers usually reveal their passions and their (hidden) gifts ie what God will call them to use to fix the brokenness of the world.

ICONS



THE MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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1 Peter 2:9, 10

Ephesians 3:10

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Matthew 5:14-16

How would you draw the Mission of the church?

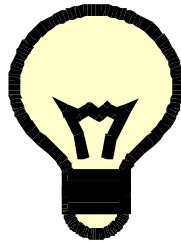
THE CHURCH AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Think about light as a metaphor for the church. To receive light from a light bulb:

A light bulb must be P_____ I_____.

Witnessing is being P_____ I_____ and allowing the miracle of God to shine through you.

Draw a circuit to show how you shine God's light in the world.



"Do not ask what the world needs. Instead, ask what makes you come alive. Because what the world needs is more people who have come alive." --Thurmond Whitman

What is the one thing that is wrong with the world?

How do you fix it?

YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #5

The Significance of the Act of Baptism

Teacher's Preparation



Key points to make during this lesson

- Christ has commanded his followers to be baptised.
- If you have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour you have no reason not to be baptised.
- Baptism is a public identification with Jesus
- In baptism you are declaring Jesus is master of your life (Lord)
- Baptism is a tangible sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- Baptism marks your inclusion in God's family.
- Baptism represents the forgiveness received in Christ (Saviour).



Background Information

There is a lot of symbolism taking place during a baptism ceremony. Probably the closest parallel to a baptism ceremony is a wedding ceremony. Both are used to publicly mark the beginning of a covenant – a lifelong commitment to another. The action of being baptised is like the action of exchanging wedding rings after declaring your vows. The rings represent a husband and wife's commitment to one another; while the act of baptism represents our commitment to place Christ and no other in control of our lives. Like a marriage ceremony, baptism is something you're only supposed to do once in your life – at the start of your commitment to follow Christ, not after you've been living with Him for years.

Teenagers will often put off receiving baptism, as they are waiting for the 'perfect' time. They may want to wait until their friend decides to get baptised, so they can get baptised together. Other teens may want to wait for a special time of year e.g. Easter to be baptised. Though this is not a bad thing, (an Easter baptism emphasises the connection between baptism, new life in Christ, and Christ's resurrection), there is really no reason for someone who loves Christ to postpone getting baptised. Some teenagers feel like they have to sort their lives out before they can be baptised, but this has things back-to-front. We get baptised because we are

acknowledging that we can't sort out our own sin – only Jesus can deal with our sin. If a teenager who has made a commitment is struggling with taking the step of baptism then a good passage to walk them through is the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:30-39, where the Ethiopian is baptised immediately after committing his life to Christ.

In this fifth study on baptism we will look at what is happening in a baptism when a believer today chooses to take that step of faith. In Baptist circles, proclaiming Jesus as your Lord and Saviour is the only prerequisite for believer's baptism. Ideally a person should be baptised as soon after making a life commitment to Jesus as possible, thus marking the beginning of a life with Christ and initiation into God's family. Some people can point to a date and time when they made a life-changing decision to follow Christ, others cannot point to a specific time; so gradual has been the regenerating work of the Spirit in their lives. God works through these extremes (and everything in between) to bring people into saving relationship with Himself and baptism allows us to testify to the mysterious work of God's grace in our lives by pointing to the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38) and the purification of our consciences (1 Peter 3:21).

As we have already discovered in Studies 1 and 2 there is more to Christian baptism than repentance (which was associated with the baptism John administered). Though repentance is closely connected to Christian baptism, the distinguishing mark between John's baptism and Christian baptism as instituted by Jesus is the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit is given to the believer at baptism, indeed according to Scripture the Holy Spirit may be received before or after baptism (Acts 8:14-17 and Acts 10:42-47). However, one reason that Christian baptism is important is that it acts as a marker pointing to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

If possible, baptism should take place in the community of faith, as baptism signifies you are committing to God's family, where we have a responsibility to strive for unity amidst the diversity of the church across the world and throughout the centuries. We are all baptised into Christ (Gal 3:26-29) and as such baptism should be the great equaliser. Racial divisions, class distinctions, etc are overcome in baptism, as we are all equal in Christ. Furthermore our inward faith needs to be linked with the community of faith – by enacting the Gospel physically in our bodies, baptism like a wedding ring gives a physical tangible sign of our conversion. Baptism may be likened to a seal because it marks, affirms, attests, and authenticates our union with Christ. We can look to our baptism in times of uncertainty, as the symbol that we are in Christ and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism should be a public event and this has three implications. Firstly, our faith cannot be merely private. A public declaration to follow Jesus accords some degree of accountability for the person being baptised. Secondly, a public declaration has implications for the faith community that is present during the baptism. The ceremony functions as an encouragement

and a reminder to each believer of the promise they have made to follow Christ, and is an opportunity to renew that vow. Thirdly, for those outside of the faith community who have gathered for the baptism, the declaration of faith functions as a witness for Christ as well as an act of political significance. To be baptised is to intentionally align oneself with the in-breaking of Christ's Kingdom. It is an act of defiance against government, (even a democratic government of Canada) as one claims to serve Christ as master before all others. The primary allegiance is to Christ not to country. In other nations the act of baptism may result in being cut off from family, culture or society.

In baptism there is a mystical identification with Christ through the physical act (Rom 6:3). We tend to take this verse and use the act of going under to represent dying, and coming up from immersion to represent resurrection. While this is a very strong picture, the physical act of baptism does not have to look like what it represents – baptism is a symbol, not a photograph. The important aspect in representing our identification with Christ is the water, as water represents the invisible cleansing of our consciences by Christ. In Baptist circles the primary mode of baptism is by immersion, though some people, for medical reasons may be baptised using another mode. More information on the different modes of baptism will be provided in Study 6.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Copies of the Baptism Acronym Handout
3. Pens

OUTLINE OF LESSON #5



Opening Activity:

Take the youth to the baptistery in your church. Let them stand in it and look around it. (You may need to arrange with the church custodian to have any coverings removed though the tank does not need to be filled).

While at the baptistery talk the teens through what happens in a baptism in your church. It will be something like the following:

The pastor comes into the baptistery. Then the person to be baptised follows, sometimes a white gown is worn. The pastor asks the person some questions, to which the expected answer is "yes!"

"Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?"

"Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?"

"Do you turn from sin, renounce evil and intend to follow Christ?"

"Will you live within the fellowship of the church and will you serve Jesus Christ in the world?"

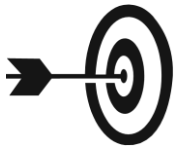
The person being baptised may also be asked to share their testimony - their story of how they came to give control of their life to Jesus. After this the person is immersed by the pastor by bending their knees and going backwards into the water before coming up again. Then the pastor usually lays hands on the person and prays for them, confirming the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life; and commissioning them to live as a witness for Christ in the world.



Discussion Questions

How is getting baptised different from taking a bath or going for a swim?

Jesus instructed his followers to physically baptise those who became His disciples (Mt 28:18-20). Can you think of reasons why Jesus commanded his followers to baptise others and why we, as the church, continue to do this?



Group Activity:

Have the teens form groups of three or four and provide a Handout Sheet and pen to each group.

Explain baptism is a symbolic event. On the sheets is an acronym for BAPTISM. Look up the verses listed at the top of it, and put them under the appropriate letter of the acronym.

Remember the same verse may apply to more than one letter:

BAPTISM ACRONYMN

Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:9-12; Ephesians 4:3-6; Acts 2:36-38; Acts 16:29-33; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 22:14-16; Acts 10:42-48; Acts 19:1-6.

Belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour

(Ephesians 4:3-6 – one Lord is Jesus and baptism is a profession of belief in Him.
Acts 2:36-38. Acts 16:29-33. Acts 10:42-48. Acts 19:1-6).

Act of obedience (to the command of Christ)

(Matthew 28:18-20)

Power of the Holy Spirit is with you

(1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:3-6 – baptism is Trinitarian, in the Name of the Father, Son and Spirit. One baptism is connected to having the one Spirit. Acts 2:36-38. Acts 10:42-48. Acts 19:1-6).

Telling others you've turned from sin and that God is in control of your life

(Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:9-12).

Included in God's people (the church universal)

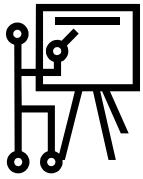
(1 Corinthians 12:13 – one body. Ephesians 4:3-6. Acts 10:42-48 – these Gentiles were invited in by Peter).

Sign of God's grace and forgiveness

(Acts 2:36-38. Acts 16:29-33. Acts 22:14-16. Acts 10:42-48).

Mark of your promise to follow Jesus forever

(Romans 6:1-4 – beginning of living a new life).



Teaching Moment on the Significance of Baptism

There are many layers to the meaning and symbolism of the baptism event.

Allow for discussion around the acronym and use the information in the background section to offer explanations on points the teenagers can't grasp for themselves.



Conclusion

Conclude with summarising the main points of today's lesson.

BAPTISM ACRONYM

Place the following references under the relevant letter of the acronym:

Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:9-12; Ephesians 4:3-6;
Acts 2:36-38; Acts 16:29-33; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 22:14-16;
Acts 10:42-48; Acts 19:1-6.

Belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour

Act of obedience (to the command of Christ)

Power of the Holy Spirit is with you

Telling others you've turned from sin and that
God is in control of your life

Included in God's people (the church universal)

Sign of God's grace and forgiveness

Mark of your promise to follow Jesus forever

YOUTH BAPTISM STUDY #6

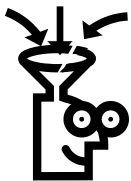
Why are there different practices of Baptism in the Christian Church?

Teacher's Preparation



Key points to make during this lesson

- God honours all acts of faith and though there may be some evidence for preferring one method of baptism over another, it is the desire of the hearts of God's believers that is most important.
- Some students may have already experienced baptism as an infant or attended family baptisms and may have questions regarding the different modes or methods of baptism. The purpose of this material is to help teachers answer questions that they may have about those experiences. It is important to never minimize the significance of that event to their family in light of their personal spiritual journey.



Background Information

Infant Baptism

Infant baptism is practiced by the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant churches such as the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United Church traditions. Though all these traditions practice infant baptism the Roman Catholic understanding of the rite differs significantly from its Protestant counterparts.

In the Roman Catholic Church the traditional teaching is that all humans are born with 'original sin'. We owe a debt to God that we cannot repay. The only way to remove this original sin is to be baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Once baptized, essentially a person's slate is wiped clean – Jesus resets the balance to zero and a person is no longer in debt to God. From that point on to get to heaven a person's good deeds must outweigh their bad deeds. It should be noted that the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church softened greatly under Pope John Paul II and many Christians worship Jesus within the Roman Catholic Church without adhering to all of its teachings and investing certain practices with their own meanings.

Infant baptism is practiced in Reformed Protestant circles to emphasize God's grace and initiative in salvation. A child of believing parents is baptized to mark that its life has already been touched by God, as the child will be raised in a Christian home. During the baptism ceremony the minister emphasizes that baptism does not make a child a Christian and when the child comes of age, he or she must choose for him or herself to accept the promises made on their behalf by their parents. At such a time, usually age 14-16, the child takes confirmation

classes or catechism lessons in which they are instructed in the tenets of the Christian faith and asked if they confirm these beliefs and teachings. Following the classes the child will either reject the Christian faith for the time being by not participating in the confirmation rite; or 'complete their baptism' by publicly affirming their acceptance of Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Of course a person's relationship with God does not hinge on this one moment (confirmation). Often a person will have 'completed their baptism' many years before by having made a commitment to follow Jesus in their heart. Confirmation is simply letting others know of that decision. Similarly, a person who chooses not to be confirmed at 14, but returns to the Christian faith later in life can choose to complete the confirmation rite at 24 or 64 or any time in the future. It's not as though they never have another chance to follow Jesus if they choose not to get confirmed as a teenager.

Traditions that practice infant baptism believe that they have Scriptural record and historical precedent to baptize young children and infants. Some arguments they draw on include:

- i. The New Testament records that "whole households were baptized" (Acts 16: 15, 33)
- ii. Jesus blessed the children who came to Him (Mark 10: 13-16)
- iii. Origen (an early church historian from the second century) wrote that "according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants." (*Homilies on Leviticus*, 8:3:11)
- iv. Probably the strongest support for promoting infant baptism stems from the Jewish practice of circumcising infants on the 8th day. Circumcision was the sign of inclusion in the Old Covenant and the people of Israel. The Reformed Tradition in particular stresses that God deals with families and see baptism as the sign of the New Covenant marking a person as one of God's family. Children of believers receive the sign of the New Covenant, as they are part of God's family, under his grace until such a time as they choose to accept or reject Christ for themselves.

Opponents who argue against infant baptism believe that references to "whole households" do not necessarily include infants and that there needs to be an individual acceptance of the good news of Jesus Christ. There is no direct mention of infant baptism in Scripture and it is 200 years after Christ before it appears in historical record. In the book of Galatians, Paul argues that circumcision is not required for Gentiles to receive the good news and baptism is not a substitution for the law of the old covenant.

Infant Baptism (and naming a child) is sometimes referred to as 'christening', especially in Anglican circles. This differs from 'chrismation', which is a practice derived from the Eastern Orthodox. Chrismation is when a person or child is anointed with holy oil, often on the forehead in the sign of the cross. Traditionally chrismation was used at baptism or confirmation as an affirmation of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of the individual. Recently however, chrismation has been known to be practiced in conjunction with infant dedication where the anointing signifies God's grace and functions as a blessing on the child.

Believer's Baptism

Believer's baptism is practiced by many Evangelical Denominations such as Baptist, Alliance, Mennonite, Evangelical Free, etc. Practitioners believe that there is strong Biblical evidence for believer's baptism, as demonstrated in Acts 8 with the baptism of the Ethiopian. They are clear that baptism is not the provision of salvation but rather the sign of conversion. It is not for God's sake, but for our sake as an identification with and witness to the family of God. Believer's baptism emphasizes the individual's response to God's grace and the good news.

Nearly all of the Church Fathers agreed with believer's baptism. Furthermore those denominations that practice infant baptism will also administer believer's baptism to adult converts who have not been baptized before.

Generally speaking, in order to become a member in a Canadian Baptist church believer's baptism by immersion is required. There are a few exceptions but this is the position of the denomination regarding baptism. For this reason infant dedication services are held in our churches (and other denominations that do not practice infant baptism) to welcome children into the family of God. These services honour the parents' decision to raise their child within the Christian faith and the church. It is expected that the child will receive Christ as their personal saviour and demonstrate their conversion through baptism. They must own their faith.

The Controversy

The diversity of approaches to baptism among denominations hinge on how they perceive the following questions:

When should the water be administered? (At birth or on profession of faith)
How much water should be used?

All agree that we are welcomed into the family of God at our birth in order to personally experience God's love and receive the redemption offered through the death and resurrection of Christ. This inclusion in God's family is celebrated in either a Child Dedication Service (no water) or an Infant Baptism Service (water).

When the child is of age a second celebration takes place either in the form of a Believer's Baptism Service (water) or a Confirmation Service (no water). These services are similar in that the individual makes a public confirmation of their own personal Christian faith before the community of believers.

Modes of Baptism

Three modes are commonly used to administer baptism:

- i. Sprinkling – this comes from the Old Testament practice whereby priests sprinkled the people with the blood of the sacrifice. There is little evidence that this method was used before the Middle Ages. Some feel it was adopted as a practical measure when water became scarce.
- ii. Immersion – this form appears to have the most Biblical support as the word for baptism can be translated as 'dipping' or 'submerging under water'. It is believed that Jesus was submerged because of the phrase "as Jesus was coming up out of the water" found in

Mark 1: 10. Others interpret this phrase to mean ‘as Jesus was coming to the shore’, rather than coming up from under the water. Also, submersion best illustrates the symbolism of dying and rising and there is much evidence that immersion was widely practiced in the history of the church. There is also evidence for pools of submersion for purification ceremonies (see Lesson 1).

- iii. Pouring – it is conceivable that the Ethiopian Eunuch received this form of baptism (Acts 8) if the river was not deep enough for submersion. There is Biblical evidence in the Old Testament that purification rites were practiced with the pouring of water over the head. Pouring has always been acceptable when immersion was not a possibility due to the health of the believer or when a deep enough river or pool was unavailable.

Perhaps the mode of baptism is the most controversial aspect among different denominations. How much water one uses and in what form the water is administered has been a cause for division. The Bible does not speak to this question directly; in fact the Bible is primarily silent on this topic except for the fact that we are told Jesus was baptized in a river. However we do not know how much water was in the river; if Jesus was submerged; or if water was poured over him.

The earliest historical evidence we have attesting to the mode of baptism comes from the Didache. The Didache was a manual that was written around 70 AD. In the Didache it says this:

"After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Didache 7:1 [A.D. 70]

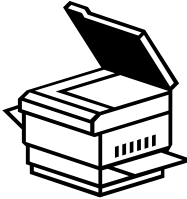
Rebaptism

Unlike sharing communion, baptism should not be repeated. This is particularly true if a person has received believer's baptism, as baptism marks the beginning of one's commitment to follow Christ.

More complex is the situation of those who have received infant baptism. In some instances individuals may feel that their infant baptism was not valid, as their parents were not committed Christians. In other instances individuals may have a powerful encounter with Christ as a teenager or adult and wish to respond to that encounter by receiving believer's baptism, but feel conflicted, as they have already received infant baptism. In yet other instances, a committed believer may relocate and become involved in a church where believer's baptism is required for membership.

In cases like these, it is important to bear in mind that opportunity should be made to celebrate and publicly testify to an encounter with Jesus. Whether this should take the form of re-baptism or another type of ceremony is a matter of prayer and discernment for the believer concerned. Also, during infant baptism, children are baptized into the church, therefore though there may be no feelings or memories associated with the event, it is still a significant marker in

a person's faith journey as many faithful witnesses were part of the baptism. When deciding what action to take in testifying to our faith it is important to talk it through with people who will be directly affected. For instance, a teenager who was baptized as an infant should talk to his/her parents if wishing to receive believer's baptism. This desire may initially seem like a rejection of their parents' tradition, or send the message that their infant baptism was not a real baptism. Talking with a pastor and others who have been influential in their faith journey is also important.



Preparation or Equipment Needed For This Lesson:

1. Bible and Lesson Outline
2. Paper
3. Pens

Outline of Lesson #6



Opening Activity:

If you are out camping and there are no washrooms or showers, how would you go about getting cleaned up or bathing for the day?

What are some methods you might use to get clean?

What would the method that you chose depend upon?

(Example, if are near a creek, you might go right in and pour water over yourself, or fully submerge if it is deep enough. If you only have a pump and a bucket, you might just wet a sponge or cloth and wipe yourself down). Your decisions are based upon what is available to you at the time and what works most effectively.



Transition:

Throughout Christianity, the practice of baptism has changed according to where the church was located; how much water was available; what they were used to according to their own backgrounds and traditions (specifically the Jewish tradition); as well as a variety of other influences. Over time, it was harder to discern what was the “original” baptismal experience that Jesus. Of course God may have planned it this way, so that we don’t fall into legalism and think there is only ‘one right way to be baptised’. God is pleased when we respond to him and different kinds of churches do different things today.



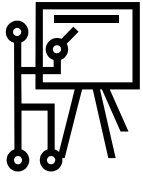
Read Scripture: Acts 16: 14-15; 25-34



Wondering Questions (to stimulate thoughts, not specific answers):

When you read in the bible that “she and her household were baptized” or “he and his entire family were baptized without delay”, how does that fit with what you understand about baptism?

If one person in a family becomes a Christian and wants to be baptized, should the whole family be baptized? Why or why not?



Teaching Moment

Teacher to draw from background info.



Different churches practice baptism in different ways. Can you tell me any ways that you have heard about before? What does “Christening” mean? Has anyone here been christened? If so, what did that experience mean to your family?

Babies are often christened or baptized shortly after their birth to symbolize that they are already a part of God’s family and that the faith of the parents will be passed on to the child. When the child grows up, he or she will be expected to claim that faith as their own through a celebration often called “confirmation”. The child confirms that Jesus is their Saviour and their Lord and they desire to follow His teachings.

The reason that some churches christen infants is that they understand baptism as replacing the act of circumcision that the Jewish people practiced. An infant boy was circumcised as a physical sign that he belonged to the Jewish community. Notice that no celebration was given for girls to mark their birth or belonging. Baptism is not really the same as circumcision in that baptism is also to be a sign of repentance and an infant cannot repent. In many Baptist churches and other churches, they have what is called a service of dedication to welcome in infant into the family of God and to hear the parents’ desire to raise the child in the ways of God. It is the hope that when a child accepts Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour, they will want to mark that decision with the act of baptism.



How much water is enough water? Do you think it matters how much water is used in baptism?

In some churches, they sprinkle some water, usually three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Other churches will pour cupfuls of water over the person and some have a large tank where the person is fully submerged under the water.



Why are there different methods of baptism and does it matter? What might the different methods signify? What might be some reasons why the method of baptism changed over time or between different denominations?

The Bible does not give clear instructions on how to be baptized. We know that in Jesus’ time they used a river. **Have someone look up and read Matthew 3: 16.**



What do you think it means when it says, “just as he came up from the water”? (It could mean ‘up from under the water’, or it could mean ‘out of the water and onto the shore’).

It is easy to see why different churches believe and practice different things because we read things differently.



Now read Acts 8: 35-38. *How would you interpret these words, “Phillip and the Eunuch went down into the water and Phillip baptized him. When they came up out of the water . . .” Since they both came “up out of the water”, does that mean that they were both submerged?*

Again you can see how difficult it is to know from Scripture what was practiced.

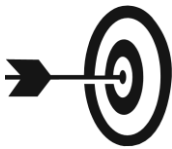


Making It Personal:

As you think about all that we have learned about baptism over the past few weeks, why might we in the Baptist church practice believer's baptism rather than infant baptism?

Why do we as Baptists, baptise by full submersion rather than sprinkling or pouring?

What would be personally meaningful to you?



Take time to write out:

- 1. What it means to you for Jesus to be your personal Saviour.*
- 2. What does it mean to make Jesus Lord of your life?*
- 3. If you were to be baptized what would it mean to you?*



Conclusion

What is most important is that whatever you do, it comes from a conviction of your heart and a desire to be authentic with God. You should not get baptized to please your parents or make the church happy. You might be a brand new Christian or you've been following Jesus for most of your years but the timing has to be according to the desire of your heart to be all that God is calling you to be.

Let me pray for each of you right now that God will reveal his will and timing as you seek Him.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

THE OPTIONAL QUESTIONS COVERED IN SECTION 7 ARE FREQUENTLY ASKED BY TEENAGERS. THE MATERIAL IS PROVIDED SHOULD YOU WISH TO COVER THEM WITH YOUR GROUP, OR TO PROVIDE YOU WITH TOOLS TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS SHOULD THEY BE ASKED BY YOUR GROUP.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTION 1:

COULD BAPTISM BE INEFFECTIVE?
ie COULD A “BAPTISED” PERSON NOT BE SAVED?



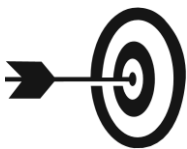
Read Scripture: 1 Peter 3:18-22



Discussion Questions

What happened in the days of Noah? (The story is covered in Gen 6-9 if the teens need to be reminded of the Ark and the Flood).

How should we understand “saved through water”? (v20)



Activity

Have three \$20 bills with you. Take two of the bills and rip them in half from top to bottom, separating the Queen on the left from the ‘20’ on the right.

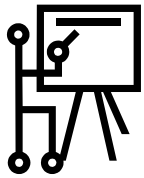
Tell the teens the image of the Queen represents having Jesus as King in your life and the image of the ‘20’ represents baptism.

Then give both halves of one bill to one youth; give the half with the Queen of the second bill to another teen; give the other half (with the ‘20’) of the second bill to a third teen.

Ask the group how much each is worth now to the teen holding it?

- The one with both halves is worth \$20 (can be taped back together).
- The one with the '20' half is worth nothing (not worth \$10, but \$0). If you took that half bill to a store and tried to buy something they would laugh at you. This half represents water baptism. If it is only water baptism it is worth nothing. The second half represents trust in Jesus Christ. Only when water baptism is accompanied by saving faith does it have any value.
- The interesting part is that the last teen, with the 'Queen' half is worth \$20. It's worth \$20 because you (the leader) know its value and you are willing to replace it with the third full \$20 bill you brought.

Note: Make sure to get all your bills back before the end of the lesson!



Teaching Moment

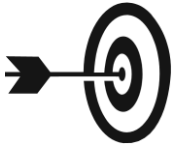
In the Biblical account of Noah, God judges the world for its wickedness by destroying all life by floodwaters. Noah is the only human considered righteous or blameless by God. God saves Noah and his family (8 in all) from the floodwaters by instructing Noah to build an Ark. Similarly, in Exodus 14:21-30 God saves the Israelites using water. The Israelites pass through the Red Sea on dry ground, but the pursuing Egyptians are killed by the water. In both these accounts water represents God's judgement and the result is that only a few (those belonging to God) are saved.

The phrase 'saved through water' should not be taken literally. We are not saved by the physical water used in baptism. The water or whole act of baptism points beyond itself. The water symbolizes our trust in Christ. We are saved through Christ. Just as Noah was saved by being in the ark (evidence of his trust in God), so we are saved by being in Christ.

From this we see that baptism could be ineffective. Baptism must point beyond us to God. Baptism is "ineffective" if it is only an action we do and nothing more. Baptism points to what God has done and is doing in the world. We are only saved because of what Christ has done for us – if we are not [trusting] in Christ then baptism is meaningless because it is not pointing to Christ. Baptism in itself does not save us – Christ does.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTION 2:

CAN YOU BE A CHRISTIAN AND NOT BE BAPTISED?



Activity

Have the teens look up the following verses and answer the questions associated with each reference:

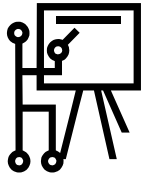
Ephesians 1:13-14. *According to this verse, what assures us that we are the children of God? When did the Ephesians receive this assurance?*

Acts 2:38. *According to this verse, when would it appear that Peter's hearers would receive the Holy Spirit?*

Acts 8:14-17. *Which came first: baptism with water or the reception of the Holy Spirit?*

Acts 10:44-44. *Which came first: baptism with water or the reception of the Holy Spirit?*

From these verses what can we say about baptism, the Holy Spirit and belief in Jesus?



Teaching Moment

The only thing necessary to salvation is accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of your life. If you have done this you are a Christian even if you have not been baptised. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is the assurance that you belong to Christ. As we have seen from the verses, the reception of the Holy Spirit is not dependent on baptism. Baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, if you are a believer and you continue not to be baptised you are disobeying a command of God. This does not mean that you are not a Christian. What it does mean is that you are missing out on a rich spiritual experience that God wants you to have. In the NT conversion (repentance), baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, all occur together and are never separated in the accounts. Today in the experience of many believers conversion and baptism may be separated by many years, or a person may pass away without being baptised. While it is God's design that all three should come together in the life of the believer, even if they are separated by time, ultimately the only thing necessary for salvation is a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

Unit Overview

This curriculum unit is designed as a resource to help youth leaders take an in-depth look at baptism with their students. The lessons function as an introduction to, and an overview of, baptism in the Christian Church. These lessons on baptism are not designed for use as baptism preparation classes, as the unit does not address the broader issues of making a faith commitment, or the person and work of Jesus. These issues would be central to a baptism preparation course, and as such are covered in the separate set of resources for use in preparing a young person for baptism. This unit can be used by groups with both believing and non-believing students.

The aim of this unit is to provide youth leaders with a quality resource that will enable them to confidently teach on baptism to their youth group as a whole. For this reason each lesson follows a similar format and covers the background material in significant detail. Each lesson has three parts: the teacher's preparation consisting of key points, background information and a list of equipment; a lesson outline; and a blank handout (if applicable) for photocopying. Links to YouTube clips and illustrations can be found on the youth website at www.cbwcyyouth.ca.

This unit, "Introduction to Baptism" consists of six lessons that are best taught in order:

1. Background to the Practice of Christian Baptism
2. Jesus' Baptism
3. Baptism and Conversion – Becoming Part of God's Story
4. Baptism and Discipleship
5. The Significance of the Act of Baptism
6. Why Are There Different Practices of Baptism in the Christian Church?

Leaders are encouraged to read through the entire set of lessons before teaching the unit to their group. Each lesson can be adapted to meet the needs of individual groups e.g. they can be pared down, or taught in a more discussion based forum. Leaders should not feel guilty about omitting short sections that are inappropriate for the level of their group. Should a leader decide not to teach the entire material for a given lesson they are still encouraged to thoroughly prepare and read through all of the material, as it may help to address questions raised by teens during the lesson.

When teaching the material, if a teenager raises an unanswerable question, leaders are encouraged to be honest, admit to not knowing the answer and attempt to find one for the next time the group meets. The Pastor, the Youth Director, and the Youth Leadership Team Rep for your area are on hand to provide advice and guidance. Contact details can be found on the website listed above. Be sure to follow up on the difficult question the next time the group meets. Be willing to share about doubts and struggles, particularly during Lesson 3. Teenagers are encouraged in their own faith journeys when they hear about the on-going journey of faith their leaders are living.