

## Small Group and Personal Bible Study

**Memory Verse:** Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

### Small Group Questions:

1. What do you understand baptism to represent?

Allow people to examine Tim's preaching and discuss their understanding on baptism. Romans 6:3-4 is a great teaching on baptism. Baptism is a way to identify with Christ, his death (as I am submerged under water) and resurrection (as I come out of the water) and we are made new. It also is a way of acknowledging the cleansing of sin. Just as water washes away dirt from my body, so the blood of Jesus washes away my sin.

2. Why do you think people confuse baptism as being a means of salvation?

Read Mark 16:16, this is a verse often quoted to justify baptism as a means of salvation. How do you understand this verse? (Read the entire verse, who is condemned?)

Can you find any places in the bible that indicates salvation is given freely apart from baptism? I believe one place is the cross when the thief calls out to Jesus. He is reassured that today he will be with Jesus in paradise and at no point is he told to be baptized. (Luke 23:32-43). Additionally, throughout the bible, salvation is declared by believing in Jesus Christ alone and baptism is not even mentioned. Just a few examples: John 3:16, John 1:12-13, John 5:24, John 6:46, John 11:25-26, Romans 1:16, Romans 3:22-24, Romans 10:9.

3. What did you experience the day you followed Jesus in baptism?

Let people in your group share.

For me, it was an opportunity to declare my love and trust for Jesus and commit to living my life with him as the Lord of my life. It was a great opportunity of worship as the day I was baptized as an adult I was also able to help baptize my wife and my three daughters the same day. Since that day, it has been a great pleasure of mine to baptize family members, dear friends, and members of this church body. I have seen the joy we experience in declaring our obedience and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

4. If you have not already been baptized, what is preventing you from making that decision?

Allow time for people to talk about this.

NOTE: Group leaders; don't assume everyone has been baptized. We cannot guilt people into baptism but encourage and teach them and let the Holy Spirit convict them. Perhaps your entire group is willing to come alongside the person and be present for his or her baptism. On one occasion I even baptized a member of my small group in a pool during our small group meeting time. It was unplanned and spontaneous but God was in control. These make for memorable moments of God moving in the hearts of people.

5. Some of us were baptized as infants and had nothing to do with that decision. Has that been your experience? If so, how do you feel about being baptized once again, this time as a personal decision you have made on your own to follow Jesus?

Growing up in the Lutheran church I was baptized as an infant, as was my family. Once I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior I realized I needed to take this step of being baptized this time as an adult and I have never regretted that day. In fact, I would regret had I chosen not to stand up and declare Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior publicly.

*If you have never been baptized or only baptized as a small child when you had nothing to do with that decision, I want to encourage you to make the call and be baptized next week on May 6 at 6:00 pm.*

**This week's daily reading plan:**

This week, be encouraged as you read about the experiences of many followers in the book of Acts as they believed and were baptized.

- Day 1 – Acts 2:14-40 Peter and the 3000 believers
- Day 2 – Acts 8:26-40 Phillip and the Ethiopian
- Day 3 – Acts 9:1-18 Saul's conversion and baptism
- Day 4 – Acts 10:24-48 The baptism of Cornelius and the large gathering
- Day 5 – Acts 16:16-40 The belief and baptism of the Jailer and His Family