



FRESH START

You are beginning life's most satisfying adventure – your walk with God! As you start this adventure, here's what God says to you:

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be —you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Psalm 32:11 (MSG)

When you make a commitment of your life to Jesus, not only is your "slate wiped clean", you also get a "fresh start" – a new lease on life. This class is designed to help you have a good start to your fresh start. During these weeks together you'll discover and begin to unwrap ten gifts that God gives you:

F ORGIVENESS	– Accepting God's Grace
R ELATIONSHIP	– Worshipping
E NCOURAGEMENT	– Handling Failure
S CRIPTURE	– Understanding God's Word
H ELP	– Following God's Guidance
S HAPE	– Being You
T OGETHERNESS	– Living in Community
A UTHORITY	– Serving Others
R ECOGNITION	– Being Baptized
T ESTIMONY	– Telling Your Story

This session: RECOGNITION – Being Baptized

*For we died and were buried with Christ by **baptism**. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live **new lives**. Romans 6:4 (NLT)*

What is baptism?

1. An outward sign of an inward change.

Those who become Christians become **new persons**. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ there is a transformation that takes place. It might not be seen immediately, but it happens. It's a heart deal. Your heart changes, you really are a new creation. When you are baptized, as you go beneath the water, it pictures your old life being gone, and when you're raised out of the water, it pictures that your new life has come.

2. An act of obedience.

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

Baptism is a tremendous act of obedience. It's something you do because Jesus said that we are to do it. We're showing God and others, right from the beginning, that we are going to do our best to obey what Jesus says. And it has such a powerful meaning to you!

In Matthew 28, the Great Commission, Jesus instructed His followers to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here's why: You will be baptized in the name of the Father because God could not imagine heaven without you. You will be baptized in the name of the Son because Jesus had you on His heart while He hung on the cross. And you will be baptized in the name of the Spirit because God by His Spirit lives in you to help you and empower you as you live for Jesus every day!

3. A picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

— Christ **died** for our sins...was **buried**...and He was **raised** from the dead.... 1 Corinthians 5:3-4 (NLT)

When you are baptized, and you are standing in the water, that will be a picture of Jesus before He died. When you go down under the water, that will be a picture of what? That's right, His burial. And, when you are brought back up out of the water, that is a picture of what? That's right, His resurrection.

So, you need to be really thankful that Jesus rose from the dead. Otherwise, we'd just have to hold you under the water.

What is the biblical pattern of baptism?

We want, in our practices as a church, to be as close as possible to the patterns we find in the Bible. That includes how we baptize. When we talk about the biblical pattern of baptism there are two crucial elements.

1. It always follows belief.

We know that from studying how the first church did its baptisms. When we look at the early church, there was a clear pattern that developed.

The early church pattern:

- taught
- believed
- baptized

Those who **believed** what **Peter said** were **baptized**. Acts 2:41 (NLT)

This was one of the greatest accounts of a group conversion to ever take place. The total was about 3000 people.

But now the people **believed Philip's message** of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a **result**, many men and women were **baptized**. Acts 8:12 (NLT)

As she **listened** to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she **accepted** what Paul was saying. She was **baptized**.... Acts 16:14b-15 (NLT)

"She" here is a lady named Lydia. She lived in a city called Thyatira. Paul had gone down by the riverside, the place of prayer. He met Lydia. She was taught, she believed, and she was baptized. Do you see this pattern? Later in Acts 16, Paul and Silas are in prison. They are praying and singing songs of praise. An earthquake comes, the prison doors are opened and the chains fall off them. The jailer, thinking Paul and Silas have escaped, pulls his sword to take his life. Paul cries out to him to stop. The jailer falls before Paul and Silas and asks "What must I do to be saved?" Look at what they did.

Then they **shared the word of the Lord** with him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately **baptized**. Acts 16:32-33 (NLT)

Do you see the pattern? People were taught, they believed, then they were baptized. It is consistent in every one of those passages of Scripture. If you ever want to show that to someone, here's how you can remember off the top of your head where these examples are found. Baptism is an **act** of obedience, so you go to the book of Acts. And the chapters are 2, 8, and 16. 2 X 8 = 16.

2. It always is by immersion

they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water.... Acts 8:38-39 (NLT)

Here's what was happening in this verse. Philip was walking down a road where God had told him to go and he met an Ethiopian eunuch. Philip explained the scriptures and Jesus to the eunuch and the eunuch asked to be baptized.

When you read they went down into the water and came up out of the water, what's the mental picture you get of what they did, just that part of the description? Sure, they walked down in, and they walked out. Why do you think they would bother to go into the water and get soaked if Philip could have just poured or sprinkled some water on the Ethiopian's head?

Baptize literally means to:

- immerse
- dip
- submerge
- plunge

Does anyone know what significant event happened in 1611? The King James Version of the Bible was translated. Before that time, the English word "baptize" did not exist. Here's a loose paraphrase of what happened. The scholars were translating all the Greek words into English. They translated "Theos" into "God" because that's what it meant. They translated "agape" into "love" because that's what it meant. However, when they came to the Greek word "baptizo" if they had translated it into what it meant, they would have used a word like "dip," or "immerse," or "plunge," or "submerge." Here was the problem. The Church of England didn't immerse, they sprinkled. So if they had translated the word "baptizo," the Church of England would have had to have changed its practice. So, instead of translating "baptizo," they transliterated it. That means they took the Greek "b" and wrote an English "b". They took the Greek "a" and wrote an English "a" and so on until they developed the word "baptize." By doing this, they were able to continue to sprinkle and didn't have to begin immersing, following the biblical meaning of the word for "baptizo."

Why should I be baptized?

1. As a demonstration that I will follow the example of Jesus.

*One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and **he was baptized** by John in the Jordan River. Mark 1:9 (NLT)*

So much of what Jesus did in His life, He didn't do because He needed to do that, but for there to be a model for us to follow. That's true with baptism. Jesus didn't need to be baptized...He was sinless, perfect. But, He was baptized to give us an example to follow. And when He was baptized there was a voice, the voice of God that came out of heaven and said, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." In other words, when Jesus was baptized, that thrilled the heart of the Father. Well, we need to demonstrate that we are willing to follow the example of Jesus, and the first place we need to follow His example is in baptism.

2. As a display of my new life in Christ.

*For you were **buried with Christ** when you were baptized. And with Him you were **raised to a new life** because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ*

Fresh Start with God

© 2000 Gerald Sharon and Brad Johnson

from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. Colossians 2:12-14 (NLT)

It's like the little boy whose brother was about to be baptized who leaned over to his mother and loudly whispered, "Is Johnny about to be advertised?" That's what baptism is...a chance for us to advertise, to display, our faith in Jesus.

3. It's the right step after believing.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. **Why shouldn't I be baptized?**" Acts 8:36 (NIV)

Isn't that a great question: "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" That's really the right question. "Why should I be baptized?" is a defensive question. When we say, "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" we're saying there's really no reason in the world for me not to be. Or, give me a reason why I shouldn't. The assumption then becomes that I should, and that's the right assumption. Baptism is just the right, logical, next step to take once you believe.

In our next session:

TESTIMONY – Telling Your Story

Disclaimer:

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

We have permission to reproduce this Fresh Start Manual for use

in Oakhill church only;

NOT FOR RESALE, PUBLICATION, OR DISTRIBUTION.