

GROUNDING IN TRUTH

VOLUME

2

A NINE-WEEK BIBLE STUDY ON THE ESSENTIALS OF
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH STRAIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD

FROM THE MESSAGES OF ADRIAN ROGERS



Grounded in Truth: Volume Two (Bible Study)

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INTRODUCTION

GROUNDED IN TRUTH

VOLUME 2

Learning how to walk is complicated. For a young toddler, it takes courage to stand on two wobbly feet. Once you have the courage to let go, you try to master standing still without being knocked down by some outside force or simply losing your balance. Then you must once again find the courage to let go of the solid thing you have been trusting, knowing that you will fall down. But if you get up and try again, you will find yourself walking and even running.

The Christian life can be the same way. When you receive Christ, you are born again and declared a “new creation in Christ.” Baptism is a public sign of this transformation, and you discover a new foundation of biblical faith under your feet. You learn a new spiritual walk by letting go of old habits and beliefs that once held you steady. You read the Bible, discover your spiritual gifts, learn how to do the will of God, and how to live a godly life. With every step, you are learning how to walk with the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit.

As you are walking a new walk, Satan will try to get you off balance to keep you from knowing what it means to walk with God. Over time, you will become more secure and will walk closely with other believers. Eventually, others will even look to your example as a mature believer.

Whether you are a new believer or have been a Christian for a long time, it’s important to go back to the basics. We all need to be reminded of the fundamentals of the Christian life. This study focuses on helping you answer key questions that come up in the life of every believer.

Baptism, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can never save anybody. You're saved by trusting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

ADRIAN ROGERS



WEEK 1

WHY IS BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

■ INTRODUCTION

How you finish something has a lot to do with the way you begin it. This is true in a race, in the pursuit of education, and in how successful businesses become. But it is also true in our Christian walk.

Starting your Christian walk right begins with baptism. Some view baptism as unimportant or insignificant while others believe it is necessary for salvation. Because neither of these views reflects Scripture, we must learn what the Bible tells us about baptism. We must not minimize what the Bible has emphasized. Baptism is not necessary for salvation, but it is necessary to obey God. Obedience is necessary for joy, growth, and fruitfulness in the Christian life.

Jesus began His public ministry by being baptized, and He ended it by commanding baptism. He identified Himself with us in this way, and in our baptism, we identify with Him. This week, we will study baptism in the Bible and learn how and why we should be baptized.

■ PRAY OVER IT

Dear God, I have heard a lot of different teachings about baptism that can be confusing. But I know that baptism is not what saves me, and it is an important act of faith and a command You gave in the Bible. I want to be obedient to You and to help others know about Jesus. Help me to understand more about what biblical baptism means and how I can respond to Your Word in faith. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 1

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN MAN

■ PONDER IT

In the Book of Acts, God gave us a wonderful and clear example of baptism. In Acts 8, God miraculously transported Philip, a deacon of the church in Jerusalem, to an Ethiopian man who was hungry to know about Jesus. We learn a lot from his example about sharing the Gospel, obeying God, and baptizing new believers.

Read Acts 8, noting any thoughts or questions you have about baptism.

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”

So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this

Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:26-40).

Philip didn't preach a certain denomination. He didn't preach about race relations, politics, or economics. He preached Jesus. When the man believed in Jesus, Philip baptized him as soon as possible.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- What questions about baptism do you hope to find answers to this week?
- What topics are we guilty of preaching about other than Jesus?

DAY 2

THE METHOD OF BAPTISM

■ PONDER IT

God designed baptism with a purpose. Each part of the process is significant, which is why it is important we learn the biblical method of baptism.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

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And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:36-39).

Baptism is by immersion, placing a person under the water and bringing him out of the water. Both Philip and the Ethiopian man went into the water. This part of baptism is not incidental or optional. Jesus did the same thing when he was baptized.

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove (Mark 1:9-10).

Jesus wasn't baptized *near* the Jordan River, but *in* the Jordan River. He journeyed about 60 miles to arrive there because the water was deep enough to be fully immersed. The text says He came up out

of the water. Jesus did this as an example to us that we should follow. Immersion is an essential part of baptism.

The Gospel of John states the reason John the Baptist chose to baptize people in the Jordan River.

Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized (John 3:23, emphasis added).

John could have baptized believers in Jerusalem in smaller bodies of water. But he took a long journey because he knew the importance of immersion. It takes a lot of water for biblical baptism.

“Bapto” is the Greek word for baptism, which literally translates as “to immerse.” The way it was used in the original Greek language was in the context of immersing or dipping fabric into dye. All early Christians practiced baptism by immersion. However, the early English translators created the word “baptize” because the Anglican Church was using sprinkling as the method of baptism. They didn’t want to embarrass King James, who had commissioned their work, by translating the word as “immersion.”

When we baptize people in the Name of Jesus, it is important that we fully immerse them in water.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What influences have shaped your understanding of baptism?
- Have you been baptized by immersion? Why or why not?

When I got baptized,
I attended my own funeral.

ADRIAN ROGERS

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

■ PONDER IT

It is important that we follow the biblical method for baptism because there is meaning in every detail. If you change the method, you change the meaning. Ultimately, baptism demonstrates what God did for you when He saved you.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:1-5).

When we get saved, we die to sin and enter into new life with Christ. This is the meaning of baptism. It is a picture of our burial. It represents the grip of sin in our lives being put to death, then waking up to the newness of life found through salvation in Jesus. It is a physical representation of our past, present, and future.

Past—Before we are immersed in the water, we represent the “old man,” lost in sin.

Present—The immersion illustrates dying to self and being buried with Christ’s death. We crucify the “old man.”

Future—We emerge from the water just like Jesus emerged from the grave. We come out of the water, a living testimony of the victory of salvation through the resurrected Savior.

Our sin does not cause us to sink to the bottom with no hope. We are no longer haunted by the ghost of guilt. Instead, we are immersed

and then come out of the water. We die to self and rise up again to our new lives in Christ. When we rise out of the water, it is a representation that we are stepping into a new life.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

One day our physical bodies will die. But we are reminded through baptism that we do not need to be afraid of death. Just as Jesus rose from the grave, we will also be resurrected with Him. We will be raised and transformed into His likeness.

The Bible commands baptism because God wants us to understand and display to the world what happens to us when we get saved. We die with Christ, we're buried with Christ, we rise with Christ, we live with Christ, and we're going home to Heaven to be with Christ. Baptism is a graphic illustration, and that's why the method and the meaning of baptism should not be overlooked or disobeyed. They symbolize salvation.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- What stands out to you about the symbolism of baptism?
- Have you been biblically baptized? When you were baptized, did you understand the meaning of it? If you haven't been baptized, how does understanding its meaning impact you?

Baptistries can look like graves because that's what they are: liquid tombs.

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DAY 4

THE MOTIVE FOR BAPTISM: COMMITMENT AND CONVERSION

■ PONDER IT

A little boy got saved, and his Sunday school teacher told him to tell the pastor so that he could be baptized. Puzzled, he walked over to the pastor and said, “Sir, I’ve been saved, and I need to get advertised.” Though the little boy didn’t get the word right, his comments reflected the biblical motive for baptism.

Baptism proclaims your commitment to Jesus. When we bury ourselves with Christ through baptism, we proclaim to the world that we identify with Jesus, just as He identified with us.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Baptism does not make you a Christian, but it provides evidence of your faith in the same way that wearing a wedding ring symbolizes a person’s commitment to their spouse. The ring doesn’t make a person married, but it indicates that they are married.

Baptism is a portrait of conversion. When you get baptized, you show the world that Jesus has changed your life forever. It demonstrates the change in your heart and life to a watching world. When those who are unsaved see you get saved and get baptized, they notice something is different and wonder why, which provides the perfect opportunity to share the Gospel.

■ **PUT IT IN WRITING**

- When you were baptized, did it happen in such a way that you displayed your commitment to Jesus? Why or why not?
- How does baptism represent your conversion? What role has baptism played in telling others about Christ?

You're not going to Heaven by being baptized. You could be baptized so many times the tadpoles have your Social Security number and still not go to Heaven.

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DAY 5

THE MOTIVE FOR BAPTISM: THE COMMAND TO OBEY

■ PONDER IT

Baptism is not a suggestion; it is a command. This was the very last command Jesus gave in the Gospel of Matthew.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen (Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus told the disciples to make and baptize new disciples and to teach them to do the same. Baptism was not only for Christians in the first century, but it was also a mandate for the Church forever. It still applies to us today.

In Acts 10, Peter preached the Word of God to the household of Cornelius. The Holy Spirit came upon many people, both Jews and Gentiles, who believed in Christ. Peter commanded these new believers to be baptized. Peter didn't suggest baptism; he commanded it. He knew its importance and wanted to obey Jesus' command.

“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:47-48a).

Obedience brings joy and fruitfulness. Many Christians lack joy because they haven't been obedient. After Philip left the Ethiopian man he had just baptized, the man went on his way rejoicing. (See Acts 8:26-40.)

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, the Lord opened the prison doors in the middle of the night when the prison guard was

fast asleep. When the prison guard awoke, he was going to kill himself out of remorse for accidentally letting the prisoners go free. Before he could do it, Paul and Silas preached the Gospel to him, and he and his household were saved and baptized. After this happened, the Bible says he rejoiced. (See Acts 16:25-34.)

If you want to understand the Bible more or to be more fruitful in your Christian life, start by obeying what you already know. You won't be given more light when you haven't used the light you already have. Joy and fruitfulness come when we begin the right way by walking in obedience and being baptized.

Our motives for baptism should be to proclaim our commitment to Christ, to portray the conversion of our hearts, and, most importantly, to obey Jesus' command to be baptized. When we are baptized, we demonstrate that we belong to Jesus.

■ PUT IT IN WRITING

- How does knowing baptism is a command impact how you view it?
- How do you see baptism bringing joy into your life? If you were baptized, how did you feel afterward? If you have not been baptized, what is your next step of faith?

Obedience is the missing ingredient
in so many Christians' lives.

ADRIAN ROGERS

DAY 6

START RIGHT: BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

■ PRACTICE IT

A minister took his family to Washington D.C. where they toured the Smithsonian Museum. As they neared the end, they came to a wax figure of the First Lady at the time, Lady Bird Johnson. As the minister explained to the children who the figure was, the actual First Lady walked up beside them. She kindly introduced herself and talked with the family.

A few moments later, a man set up his camera nearby. He said, “Excuse me, could you all step aside so I can take a photo of the wax figure of Lady Bird Johnson?” Graciously, the real-life Lady Bird stepped to the side and stood in the shadows as the man took his photo.

Just like the man’s photograph of the wax figure, baptism is only a picture of something much better. It is a representation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not take so much pride in your baptism that you miss the real meaning—Jesus.

Baptism is meaningless unless it is a proclamation made by a person who has put his or her faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not been saved, you can receive Him by faith and be saved today. Pray, inviting Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior. Then thank Him for saving you and obey God’s command to be baptized.

■ PROCLAIM IT

If you prayed to receive Christ, please share your decision with another Christian you know or with your pastor. We would also like to hear about it so that we can provide you with free resources to help you grow in your new faith. Please let us know by going to lwf.org/discover-jesus, scrolling down the page, and clicking on *I Believe*.

If you are saved and have not obeyed God’s command to be baptized or have not been baptized according to the Bible’s example, speak with

your pastor and make an appointment to be baptized. Declare your salvation in this next step of faith.

If you have been baptized, consider sharing the story of your baptism with someone who hasn't yet been baptized. This might be someone in your family or someone you are discipling. Share why it was important for you to be baptized and be willing to answer any questions.

A joy is not a joy until you share it.

ADRIAN ROGERS