

F.A.Q's: Frequently Asked Questions

Lesson 2—What about Baptism?

OVERVIEW

Background Bible Passage: Acts 10:44-48; Acts 16:29-33.

Key Verse: Acts 2:38; John 3:1-7; 15-16; Matthew 28:18-20.

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- What do you believe about baptism?
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.

OPENING ACTIVITY

SAY: Today we're continuing a five week unit called F.A.Q.s—Frequently Asked Questions but first let's talk about your week.

- *Go around the room and let everyone share one highlight and one low point from their week. (If you have a large class, just take a few volunteers but perhaps not the same ones who shared last week.)*

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, "It really doesn't matter if you're here or not." Small things communicate great messages. Let the three "small" things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

KEY VERSE

Topic: Does a person have to be baptized to go to heaven?

- *Does a person have to be baptized to go to heaven? What do you believe and why?*

SAY: We say we believe certain things, but do we really know what the Bible has to say about them or have we just believed them because a teacher or preacher told us to. During the next few moments I am going to challenge your beliefs and I want you to use the Bible to show me what you believe and why?

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Acts 2:38

- *If you don't believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, then explain this verse. Why does it talk about baptism for the forgiveness of sins? Do the waters of baptism wash away a person's sins? What do you believe about this and why? Show me what the Bible says about what you believe.*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read John 3:5

- *If you don't believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, then explain this verse. Why did Jesus say that you must be born of water (baptism) and the Spirit? Explain this to me and back up what you believe with Scripture.*

(Keep your Bibles open to John 3.)

SAY: The Bible is clear that salvation comes by grace through faith and not through the act of baptism but people can twist Scripture just enough to confuse someone who isn't firmly grounded in what they believe.

- *Were you ready to defend what you believed? Or, did you find yourself able to say what you believed but not knowing why or where to find it in Scripture?*

SAY: Before we continue let's explain the verses at which we just looked:

Concerning Acts 2:38, several things must be remembered:

- (1) Luke's (the author's) intention here is *NOT* to give a prescription that says, "This is how a person is saved." Proof for this lies in the fact that later in the book of Acts (5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18), forgiveness of sins is always based on faith alone.
- (2) Also, the Bible never contradicts itself and every passage must be taken in context with the whole. No where does the Bible teach baptism as a means for the forgiveness of sins. All the teachings on forgiveness show that salvation comes through faith alone (John 3:16, 36; Rom. 4:1-17; 11:6; Gal. 3:8-9; Eph. 2:8-9; etc.)

- (3) Furthermore, part of the problem here might be one of translation. The New Testament was originally written in Greek and the Greek word for “for” (i.e., “for the forgiveness of sins”) is *eis* which, with the accusative case, may mean “on account of, on the basis of.” It is used this way in Matthew 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4. In other words, another translation of this could read, “Repent and be baptized on account of the forgiveness of sins,” speaking to what would happen as the result of someone being saved—that they would turn from their former way of life (repent) and follow the Lord in baptism.

SAY: Now let’s take a closer look at John 3. One reason that some people misinterpret Scripture is because they don’t take it in context, meaning that they look at a single verse without understanding what it is saying in relation to the verses around it or the book as a whole.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read John 3:1-7

- *What do you think “born of water” means?*
- *What two types of birth is Jesus referring to here?* (Physical and spiritual—born of water and born of the Spirit. Why “water”? A great percentage of the human body is composed of what? Water. And ironically, just before a woman gives birth, what breaks—We say that her “water” breaks. This reference to being born of “water” makes perfect sense. There is no reference here to baptism at all.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read John 3:15-16

- *If being “born of water” had referred to baptism, meaning a person must be baptized to go to heaven, why didn’t Jesus include a reference to baptism in these verses?* (Can you image what John 3:16 would have said, “...whoever believes in and is baptized in Him...will have eternal life” but it doesn’t say this, does it?)

Proofs that baptism isn’t necessary for salvation:

- Throughout the Bible there are numerous references to salvation through faith without any mention of baptism.
- At no point does the Bible teach baptism as a means of salvation.
- Jesus told the thief on the cross, who was about to die and who would not have a chance to be baptized, that he would be with Him in paradise.

BIBLE LESSON

Topic: What is the importance of baptism?

- *Why should we encourage new believers to be baptized? Where does the Bible talk about this?*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Matthew 28:18-20

- *Would anyone like to share about when they were baptized?* (This would also be a great time to share your own testimony about when you were baptized.)
- *Why is baptism important?*

SAY: Many people underestimate the importance of being baptized. In the Bible there was never a question of whether or not someone would be baptized. When someone was saved, they *were* baptized. Baptism naturally followed the salvation experience.

Choose volunteers to read—Read Acts 10:44-48 and Acts 16:29-33

Baptism is important because:

- It is the first step of obedience to Christ. A person who has not been baptized has not been fully obedient to the Lord.
- It is a public witness that a person is not ashamed of his Savior.
- It is outward evidence of an inward faith.
- It presents a picture of the salvation experience.
- Jesus, our example, was baptized in obedience to the Father.
- It is a symbol of salvation but also a spiritual act of honoring God.

Illustration

Pretend that you just watched a man take the military oath as he entered the Marines. Part of this oath states that he will follow and obey the commands of his superiors. But after taking the oath he is given an order and his response is, “I don’t think I’ll do that.” Would you question his sincerity? How much more questionable is the sincerity of someone who says, “Jesus be my Lord,” meaning “You are my boss—I’ll do what you want” but who is unwilling to follow the Lord in the first step of obedience to Him.

SAY: For those who are saved but never follow in baptism, there seems to come a point where they stop growing spiritually. The reason for this is that by their lack of obedience to the Father, they have limited the extent to which they will spiritually develop.

Topic: What is the correct motive for baptism?

- *Why should someone get baptized?* (As a step of following Jesus *after* they have given their life to Christ, not as a means to getting salvation. The Bible is clear that putting your faith in anything outside of Jesus (i.e., good works, etc.) to save you cannot provide true salvation.)

Topic: What is the correct manner of baptism?

- *What is the right way to be baptized? (By immersion, which means going all the way under the water.) Why do you believe this?*
- *What do you think about churches that sprinkle or pour or what would you say to someone who said, “I don’t need to be baptized because I was sprinkled”?*

Reasons why immersion is the correct manner of baptism:

- The Greek word for “baptism” literally means “to dip” with the idea of something being submerged.
- Every baptism recorded in the Bible was by immersion.
- Baptism presents a picture of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection and that when a person accepts Christ, they died also, were buried in Christ and raised to a new life in Him (Romans 6:4).

Biblical View of Baptism

A correct view of baptism could be put in the following way:

For baptism to be Biblical, it must be:

- The right person (Someone who is saved—Baptism for an unsaved person is just an act of publicly getting wet!)
- In the right way (By immersion)
- For right reason (As an act of obedience to and of following Christ, not as a means to salvation.)

IF YOU HAVE TIME...

Topic: What about the baptism of babies?

- *Is it Biblical to baptize babies? (No. There is no place in the Bible where people are instructed to baptize babies. This is a practice that some observe believing that if a baby is baptized that salvation is guaranteed to that child—This is untrue and contrary to God’s Word. People must choose for themselves to give their lives to Christ—a parent cannot choose for them by having them baptized as a baby.)*
- *But what if a baby dies before he or she gets the opportunity to give his or her life to Jesus. Will that baby go to Heaven? Show me in the Bible why you believe this?* (If a person dies before reaching the stage of accountability, when they understand right from wrong and make a conscious choice to disobey, then that person, having never chosen to sin, will go to heaven. This is evidenced in 2 Samuel 12:21-23 where King David’s baby by Bathsheba dies and he says, “Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”)

WRAP IT UP

SAY: Always know what you believe and why you believe it. And if you know anyone who hasn’t followed the Lord in baptism—it might even be someone you’ve led to Christ—talk with them about its importance. They may not have followed the

Lord in baptism because no one has explained its significance. Also, if you haven't been scripturally baptized and you know you need to or have questions about how that happens, then talk to someone today.

Prayer Requests

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*