

Growing Our Hearts Toward God



Daily Devotionals to Help You Grow

The ability to understand baptism and practice it faithfully is crucial for the church in these days. Through baptism we are empowered to live like Him, to wear His name, to accept His forgiveness, to be embodied among His people, to receive His Spirit, and to participate in His future.

Have the
Baptized
Realized?

Exploring the depths of meaning that the Bible associates with baptism helps us understand more profoundly what it means to truly follow Jesus: just as His walk led Him to the cross, so does ours. In it we share in His death and resurrection. Under God's sovereignty and by His power, we recognize that our baptism is an essential part of our life of faith.

- Jack R. Reese, Dean of Biblical Studies,
Abilene Christian University

Did you forget that all of us became part of Christ when we were baptized? We shared his death in our baptism. When we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the wonderful power of the Father, we also can live a new life. - Romans 6:3, 4

MONDAY

Baptism is an opportunity to experience the mighty power of God..

Romans 6:1-14

1. When baptism is mentioned in scripture, the emphasis is not on what you are doing (the act of baptism) as it is on what God is doing to you through His mighty power. Why is this distinction so critical to keep in mind?
2. As you reflect on this passage, what are the implications of being united in Jesus' death? Of being united in Jesus' resurrection?
3. What *confidence* should this passage give you regarding your struggle against sin? What *challenge* should this passage give you regarding your attitude toward sin?
4. What does it mean to be "dead to sin but alive to God" (v 11)? Write down some of the practical ways you've applied (or could apply) this mindset (v 11-14) in your own life.

Study : *Scripture uses a number of metaphors, or word pictures, to describe God's powerful work in baptism. In today's reading, the metaphor of crucifixion is used. What other metaphors are used in scripture? Begin with passages like Colossians 2:11-12 and 1 Peter 3:18-22.*

Which of these metaphors is most meaningful to you? How does your study deepen your appreciation of your own baptism?

TUESDAY

Baptism is an opportunity to express total confidence and faith in God.

1 Peter 3:18-22

1. Verses 20-21 draw a number of parallels between Noah's experience of God's salvation and our own salvation through baptism into Christ. Identify as many parallels as you can.
2. Notice again that baptism is described as a place where God is powerfully at work. It isn't baptism in and of itself that saves; baptism is merely an avenue through which God's "resurrection power" is unleashed in our lives (v 21).

How do verses 18 and 21 help to clarify that one's confidence and trust should be in God, rather than in the act of baptism itself?

3. In what way could baptism be regarded as "a sinner's prayer"—an admission of one's spiritual need, an appeal for God to save as only He can save? Read through Paul's "conversion story" in Acts 22. In a similar vein, notice the connection between Paul's baptism as a way of "calling on the name of the Lord" (v 16).

Faith and baptism are sometimes mistakenly separated, as though salvation involves faith (God doing His part), and obedience, or baptism ("now I'll do my part"). Scripture, however, always depicts baptism as faith expressing itself— both confessing and claiming what God has done to save us. Baptism is a faith response to the gospel: Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 10:44-48; 16:14-15; 16:31-33; 18:8; 19:1-5; 22:16.

Southeastern's Mission: "Growing Hearts Toward God."

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
- 2 Peter 3:18*

WEDNESDAY

Baptism expresses a desire to do what is right and pursue God's will.

Matthew 3:13-17

1. Why did Jesus, who was without sin, come to John to be baptized? [Keep in mind that John was "preaching repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4-5)]. Explain, as simply as you can, Jesus' reason for being baptized.
2. What happened right after Jesus was baptized (v 16-17)? What did this experience mean to Jesus? How does this experience set the stage for Jesus' ministry to begin?
3. Jesus' ministry and our Christian discipleship share the same beginning point: His baptism. Jesus' baptism was a way of saying "yes" to God—an expression of His willingness to accept and submit to God's will, or mission, for His life. The same should be true of our baptism. What difference would it make in your Christian walk if you focused each day on this aspect of your baptism?
4. If you are a seeker of God, how would your life be the same or different if you chose to respond to the Lord in baptism?

Prayer: Read Titus 2:11-14 & 3:3-8. Specifically, what do you need to say "no" to? What do you need to say "yes" to? Spend time in prayer, asking God to help you embrace His will for your life this week.

THURSDAY

Baptism should make a positive difference in the way you think.

Colossians 3:1-4

1. What four statements are made about you in verses 1-4? Write them down below, and circle the statement that seems most "foreign" to your daily experience.

2. This passage affirms that the spiritual change a person experiences through baptism (Col. 2:11-15) is far more dramatic than the physical change a person experiences at death! That being the case, what would be one implication of each the statements above for your life?

3. What two applications are made in this passage? Practically speaking, what does this mean? Perhaps in contrast, where has your *heart and mind* been lately?

Centering your life on Christ requires living out the realities of who you are in Christ. These truths from God (rather than the lies of the world) should influence the way you view God, yourself, others, and temptation.

FRIDAY

Baptism should make a practical difference in the way you live.

Colossians 3:5-17

1. Baptism frees us from the *power* of sin (Romans 6:1-10; Galatians 2:20), but that doesn't mean we're free from the *temptation* of sin. What's the difference between the two? What attitude or "stance" should you take toward sin in your life, according to verse 5?
2. This passage makes it clear that if you are experiencing God's grace in your life, it's going to affect how you dress. Grace is dress as well as doctrine. Of all the things you're told to "put off" (v 5-10), which do you struggle with most? What reasons are given for putting these things away?
3. What three things are you called in verse 12? How would a person "dress" if he really saw himself as someone having those three identities (verses 12-14)? If you saw yourself as you really are in Christ, what wardrobe change would you make in your life today?

Prayer: Remember that you are "putting off" and "putting on" certain qualities, not because you must for entrance into heaven, but because you already live in heaven and because it is your true identity. Know who you are and live like it. Ask God to teach you this truth.