

PROGRESSING TOGETHER



PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM



www.ProgressingTogether.com
info@progressingtogether.com

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General Introduction

This series has been prepared for the specific needs of North Africa, but fits into any similar church planting situation. Having seen for years the difficulties that are associated with baptism and the integration of the baptized into the church, we want to avoid some traps. But more than that: we desire to take advantage of the marvellous opportunity that arises when someone asks to be baptized. We are convinced that this is a unique occasion—unique because it is when people want to be baptized that they are interested in knowing everything about their new faith. This is why it is well worth our efforts to make such a course the best possible.

Course Objectives

1. These lessons must be **within the reach of everyone**, regardless of the educational level or religious origin of the participants. They presuppose only a basic knowledge of the life and work of Jesus and a minimal knowledge of the Bible. The foundation for baptism is given in chronological order, and much of the material is presented in a narrative form. The lessons are easy to follow.
2. For those who are capable of seeing the implications, these lessons offer **much more in fundamental doctrine** than the majority of baptism preparation courses. When you find paragraphs between brackets [...], the content is not indispensable for following the course, but greatly helps those who want to understand more.
3. The teaching is **well-founded in the Bible** and is a good example of **healthy interpretation principles**. This course does not collect verses out of context to prove a doctrinal point. It asks, first of all, what the text meant for the people directly concerned; only after having done that can we arrive at conclusions for today.
4. **An interdenominational approach** is desirable because the growing church in North Africa is likely to come into contact sooner or later with denominations that have differing customs and teachings. We help with mutual understanding. Even if this does not correspond to our personal point of view, we can show where the different convictions come from and give the individual the freedom to make an informed choice. Examine these lessons, and you will see that a sure biblical foundation prevails, and the denominational differences appear as secondary.
5. These lessons are conceived to **allow easy transmission**. Of course, the amount of content in itself is a challenge. But the systematic division of each lesson into four parts makes it easily transmissible, even orally. Those four parts are an introduction, a narrative, a key verse, and a conclusion, and they can each be assigned to a different teacher.
6. The course is **adapted to oral cultures**: that is, to the majority of people who prefer an oral transmission rather than classic doctrinal studies. The heart of the lesson is in narrative form, followed by a memory verse. Therefore, it is accessible to the illiterate. This is very important to us since we want each little group of believers, to be able to learn and share the basics of Christianity, even in restrictive countries of limited means.
7. In this course, new believers will receive much help in **understanding the New Covenant**. Because of their past lives under the rules of Islam, they easily identify with the experience of the Jews under the Law. Just as God helped the Jewish disciples make the transfer from

the old to the new covenant, so new believers need to be helped to understand what it means to enter the New Covenant. This will help greatly when they must decide what to do in regard to local traditions and customs (for example: Ramadan, pork, visits to the graves of saints, etc.). The biblical principles they learn will become a point of reference later.

8. We aim at **the development of leaders**, with the multiplication of house churches in mind. The structure of this course facilitates such leadership development by identifying various tasks that can be delegated according to the gifting of people. It asks for instance for the practical help of the group that receives the baptismal candidate, and for a pastoral care giver from their midst, as well as up to four teachers for the four parts of each lesson.
9. Teaching the course **does not require special qualifications**. We expect beginners to be introduced and followed up by someone who has experience. Beginners can for instance be given just one of the responsibilities for the lesson. It will give them the chance to learn and practice their spiritual gifts in a non-threatening atmosphere.
10. **The integration of believers into a local church** is taught and encouraged. We ask the pastoral care giver (mentor) who has been chosen by the future church/group of the baptism candidate to personally follow up with him or her after each of the first six lessons. Therefore, each lesson provides a Personal Follow-up Page with advice and questions. This personal follow-up may be crucial for the candidate who needs help in order to apply Scripture to his personal life. The pastoral care giver will also be able to accompany the candidate as he prepares to share his personal testimony and give advice if necessary (Lesson 7). This way the new believer is also introduced early into the fold. The preparations for the baptismal ceremony can be done together.

In short, baptism is not done in a void; but by using this two-tiered structure, each member of the baptism class is linked to a group of Christian believers, even if small in size. They can join together for this series of seven lessons, while leaving the care and follow-up of the baptism candidates to the group that the candidate chooses as his church.

How to Plan this Baptism Course

1. **Offer an information session in your church.** Vision-casting is essential to engage a church in something new. To effectively motivate people, the advantages of the course should be presented and objections will need to be addressed. For example, the idea of an interdenominational baptism course may be an obstacle for many. The church must be convinced that, not only is it possible and desirable, but above all, this approach is faithful to the Holy Scriptures. It may be necessary to prove that we will not go beyond what the Bible teaches and that we use sound principles of interpretation.
2. Organize a **four-hour seminar for those who will be involved as new teachers and pastoral care givers**, unless they can attend the whole course led by trained teachers. It is better not to give out the teaching material without having had the chance to present it first, lesson by lesson. Otherwise teachers miss out on questions, objections and applications that arise from the group discussion of the content. It will be useful to understand how others arrive at their conclusions and to allow differences of opinion,

while strengthening those points to which the Scriptures give primary importance. This course facilitates that.

3. Facilitate a discussion on how to **organize such a course**. To do this there will need to be:
 - candidates for baptism
 - one or more teachers who share the parts of the lesson
 - a pastoral mentor for each candidate, and
 - a group of believers who will integrate the new believer into their church or fellowship group and help him or her in a practical way.
4. You as the initiator and overseer will need to be the one who is there throughout the course. You will be initiating the lessons, assigning parts to those who have volunteered and prepared in advanced, and following up according to the need. The pastoral care givers will need a time of feedback each time. This way you are actually church planting, helping the participants to develop their gifting till they are able to do it without your help.

Principles to follow as a teacher or pastoral mentor

The importance of the teacher is obvious in these lessons. We need to emphasize that the mentor / pastoral care giver has an equally important role: You are the person who will make the personal follow-up with the baptismal candidate after each lesson. You are well-placed to help apply to the local situation what the participant has understood in each lesson. You are also the link to his or her future local church; your role is vital.

Here are some important principles:

- Your role isn't so much to deliver good teaching as it is **to know the candidate well** enough to help him understand and apply what we find in the Bible about baptism.
- The questions in the personal follow-up are not meant to give you the "right answer", they rather help you **discover the candidate's needs**. Any answer that the candidate gives is therefore valuable. React with appreciation – after that you may find and add other possible answers. Should there be a contradiction with the Word of God, point it out.
- **Don't give premature responses**. Follow what the candidate has already been able to understand from the Bible in the last lesson. Our goal is not learning the different conclusions that theologians have arrived at, but rather following the ways of God that He used in the Bible to give us baptism to our maximum benefit. This is why we use a chronological method.
- **Be ready to say: "This question wasn't answered in today's lesson**, but save it, and you will probably find an answer in the following lessons."
- **Don't impose your personal viewpoints**. The Bible is clear on questions of prime importance, but in the secondary things, it tells us to respect the convictions of others without imposing our own. We desire to show this distinction.
- **Avoid questions that are too complex, avoid also details that are interesting but insignificant, and controversies**. Adapt your presentation to the needs, to the level of

understanding, and to the maturity of your disciples. Some of the explanatory notes that have been added in the teacher's guide are there for you to deepen your understanding of the topic at hand, but they are better left aside. Explain them only if you are questioned about them.

- If a candidate fails to meet the goals of your personal follow-up, do not hesitate to seek help from the leadership of the church group that will welcome their new member, as they will be responsible for him/her. Sometimes an outside counsellor may also be helpful.
- That said, you do not have the right to speak to others about confessions that have been made to you (unless Matt. 18:15-17 applies). But you can perhaps serve as a mediator for your friend if you realize that it would be helpful to speak with another person.
- Take advantage of the occasion to repeat the key verse. A memorized verse is a treasure for the rest of our lives.

Lesson Outlines

Lesson ①: Why be baptized?

Or: How Jesus taught his disciples that baptism was necessary

Lesson Plan

- through the baptism of repentance of John.
- through the prophetic words that John and Jesus were given in promising that Jesus would baptize His own with the Holy Spirit.
- through giving the mission to the disciples of baptizing new believers in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Key Verse: Matt. 28:18-20

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..."

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Know the candidate and his expectations of baptism and of the Christian life.
- Explore the expectations that Jesus had of those who would be baptized.
- Reflect, together, on the command to evangelize the nations.
- Pray together.
- Contact the group/local church that the candidate will become a part of.

Lesson ②: Understanding and administering Christian Baptism

Or: How Jesus baptized His own with the Holy Spirit and how He prepared them for their first Christian Baptism

Lesson Plan

- Jesus reserves the right to decide, Himself, who belongs to Him and He gives his Holy Spirit to His own. That is how believers become members of the universal church of all times and places.
- Peter explains and removes misunderstandings.
- Peter doesn't allow compromise on the essentials.
- Peter introduces Christian Baptism and 3000 people become members of the local church.
- Jesus doesn't give precise details of the baptismal ceremony, but He does give instructions concerning its consequences.

Key Verse: 1 Cor. 12:13

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body"

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Verify whether the candidate has assurance of salvation.
- If the candidate does have assurance of salvation, verify that his basis is well-founded.
- If the candidate lacks assurance of salvation, explain the basis of salvation and the implications of repentance and faith in practice.
- Consider, together, how one can help the candidate's loved ones to not misunderstand conversion, but to instead get a clear message of the Gospel.

Lesson ③: Baptism symbolizes the New Covenant

Or: How God made the church understand that they were now in the New Covenant

Lesson Plan

- through the extraordinary events that happened at Cornelius' house.
- through Peter's discourse at Jerusalem afterwards.
- through the blessing on the church of the uncircumcised at Antioch.
- with the epistle to the Colossians, Hebrews, and Romans, which make us understand the nature of the Old and New Covenant.

Key Verse: Col. 2:11-12

*"You have been circumcised with the circumcision of Christ,
... having been buried with Him in baptism. "*

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Verify that the candidates understand the New Covenant that they have entered.
- Explore the parallels between a Christian who comes from Judaism and one who comes from Islam.

- See what guidelines God gives us, in His Word, to help us respond when faced with customs and traditions of those around us.
- Identify which values and priorities of the world influence the candidate, how these oppose Christ, and have the candidate clearly renounce them.
- Read and discuss Col. 2:8.
- Identify, with the candidate, what the invisible authorities are in the world--demonic forces which may have influenced them. Help him to renounce them and to cut all ties with any form of occult practices and items. If necessary ask mature Christians for help. Col 2:15.

Lesson ④: Baptism unites us with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Or: How a person benefits from the death and resurrection of Christ

Lesson Plan

Learn from the story of the Ethiopian eunuch:

- how to be united with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- how the church knows when someone is ready for baptism.
- what is the responsibility of the one being baptized?

Key Verse: Rom. 6:3-4

*"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
have been baptized into His death? ..."*

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Help the candidate to understand that he needs Christ not only to be forgiven for bad things that are evident, but also so that all of their nature is submitted to the death of Christ.
- Show what our new identity in Christ is like and how we can live, practically, the new, resurrected life.
- Clarify that baptism, itself, does not save.

Lesson ⑤: Baptism as a sign of our new, common identity

Or: How Jesus introduces us into the universal and local church

Lesson Plan

- By his supernatural work in our spirits, Jesus makes us part of the universal, invisible church.
- By our own agreement, we become members of the local, visible church.
- By becoming loyal to our brothers and sisters in Christ just like the jailer when he transferred his loyalty from Caesar to the oppressed Christians, Paul and Silas.

Key Verse: Heb. 10:24-25

*"and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
not forsaking our own assembling together...
but encouraging / exhorting one another..."*

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Understand the biblical values of commitment, consistency in meeting, and communication in the local church.
- Help the candidate to become a member of a local group of believers, building relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Make sure that the group who will receive the candidate as their new member organizes what is necessary for the baptism

Lesson ⑥: The Lord's Supper, second ordinance of the New Covenant Or: How baptism and the Lord's Supper complement one another)

Lesson Plan

- Baptism is an initial identification with Jesus Christ, once for all.
- The Lord's Supper is an often-repeated identification with Jesus Christ.
- We take the Lord's Supper:
 - in memory of Jesus.
 - to declare He died for us.
 - to spiritually nourish ourselves in Jesus, our life.
 - to celebrate our participation in the body of Christ, the Church.

Key Verse: John 6:56

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."

Objectives for personal follow-up:

- Prepare the candidate so that they may fully profit from the communion that Jesus offers both with Himself and with their brothers and sisters.
- Show how we must examine ourselves before taking the Lord's Supper.
- Assure the candidate that if they feel they are ready to participate in communion they are ready to request to be baptized.

Lesson ⑦: How to prepare your testimony



Lesson ①: Why Be Baptised?

Or: How Jesus made the disciples understand the necessity of baptism

Introduction

What does baptism mean to you?

Definition

① THE BAPTISM OF JOHN THE BAPTIST



Read Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-22, Luke 3:1-23, and John 1:19-37.



After reading these passages, describe what baptism looks like.



In your opinion, why did Jesus allow Himself to be baptized by John?



What is the relation between John's baptism and Christian baptism?

② THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

How Jesus treated the subject of baptism and what He said about the matter



Read John 7:37-39.

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

**Read John 14:15-20.**

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth ... but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

**Read Luke 24:44-49.**

"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

**Read Acts 1:4-11.**

"For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (v5)

**CHRISTIAN BAPTISM**

How did Jesus finally introduce Christian Baptism, which His church practices everywhere even today? Matthew tells us at the end of his Gospel.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matt. 28:18-20

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

Learn exactly what Jesus said about baptism. Then, respond to the following questions.

Key Verse: Matt. 28 :18-20

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."



Who did Jesus order to baptize the people of all nations?



Who should be baptized?



According to the text, what does it mean to become a disciple?



According to Jesus, what is the key element in baptism? The water? The ceremony?



List and review the three study points in this lesson.

Conclusion



Why be baptized?



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 1

A. Review the lesson and the key verse

- 1) Can you give a summary of what you remember from the lesson?
- 2) Do you remember the key verse?

B. Know the candidate and his expectations of baptism and of the Christian life.

- 3) What do you think baptism will bring you?
- 4) What do you expect from the Christian life? What advantages? What difficulties?

C. Discuss what Jesus expected of His disciples

- 5) What does Jesus expect of you if you are baptized?
- 6) What does it mean for you to become a disciple of Jesus?
- 7) According to Isaiah 50:4-5, what is expected of a disciple?

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.....

- 8) How can you listen to His voice every day?

D. Reflect together on the command to evangelize the nations

- 9) Who is given the order of Matthew 28 to evangelize all the nations? The apostles only?
The first generation of Christians only?
- 10) If this order applies also to us, how do you intend to obey? Let 1 Peter 3:15-17 inspire your response. (Remember, Peter was there when Jesus gave his command, and knows how to apply it to all of us.)

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E. Pray together

- To listen to His voice now
- For the things you have on your heart (For example: family)

F. Homework for next week

- Memorize the Key Verse
- Try the various ways of listening to His voice every day



Lesson ②: Understanding and Administering Christian Baptism

Or: How Jesus baptized His own with the Holy Spirit and how He prepared them for the first Christian Baptism.

Introduction



According to Acts 1:12-14, were the disciples ready to start baptizing immediately?

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According to Acts 1:4-5, why not?

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PENTECOST



Read Acts 2:1-13.



What happens on this first morning of Pentecost?

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In Acts 2:11, the pious Jews understand the disciples speaking about the wonders of God. According to Acts 2:26-28, what have the disciples understood at that moment? What are these wonders of which they speak?

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According to Acts 2:32-33, what marvel of God probably touched the disciples the most in that moment?

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Do you think those who had arrived because of the noise of the wind understood what was happening?

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Read Joel 2:28-32 and compare with Acts 2:17-21.



Read Acts 2:37-41.



What were the instructions of Peter for those whose hearts were touched?



Why didn't Peter command that they be baptized in the name of the Trinity, but only in the name of Jesus?



Was it possible for the listeners to receive forgiveness without recognizing Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah-King who would deliver them from their sins? Acts 2:36 (see also Acts 4:12)

Other verses that support the necessity of faith in Jesus as Messiah, Saviour, and Son of God: Acts 10:42-43; John 3:35-36



Read Acts 2:41-47.



What are the results of Peter's exhortation?

Learn This key verse about baptism. Then, respond to the following questions.

Key Verse: 1 Cor. 12:13

*We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free –
and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

*Indeed, we all were baptized in a single Spirit to form only one body,
in which we are Jewish or Greek, slaves or free men.*

It is of this same Spirit we have all received to drink.



Does this verse speak to us about baptism of the Spirit done by Jesus or Christian baptism done by the disciples?



Jesus baptizes his believers into one body. Is this one body the visible local church, or the invisible universal Church?

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What, then, is our new identity?

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Is it obvious now why Jesus didn't ordain Christian baptism any earlier?

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② THE CHURCH OF CHRIST



Can the universal Church of Christ be seen on the earth?

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Can the local church be seen?

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Do you remember the activities that characterised the first Christian church (Acts 2:42)?

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Conclusion



According to Peter, what is necessary to be baptized (to be forgiven, saved for eternity and to receive the Holy Spirit)?

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Peter did not have any doubt that Jesus would give his Spirit to those who repented and believed. He was therefore ready to baptize them.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicted the people on Pentecost, and the same Spirit who convicts people today. When we see conviction of sin, we trust Jesus to baptize them with His Spirit, just as Peter did when he promised them the Holy Spirit if they would believe in Jesus. 1 Cor 12: 3-13 confirms this by saying that all who confess Christ as Lord are baptized by His Spirit.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Two matters of silence

1) What about the baptism ceremony?

In Acts 2, the details of the baptism ceremony are not told, but the results, yes!

As in our key verse of Matthew 28, God did not give details on how to administer the baptism ceremony.

2) And the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Peter had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who converted. (Acts 2:38) 3000 people were converted.

Did they receive the Holy Spirit? Surely, otherwise the promise of Peter would have been false.

Why does the text tell us nothing about wind, tongues of fire, or the gift of tongues descending on the 3000? Perhaps because the new birth by the Spirit of God was not manifested in this way with the three thousand. Even in the following chapters (3-7), nothing is said about a visible manifestation of the Spirit when people accepted Jesus in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 5:14).

Later, the Apostle Paul explains how the Spirit of God works. He exhorts us to accept that we, believers, do not have all the same manifestations of the Spirit but we all have the same Holy Spirit in us. This verse is the key verse of today.

You can find the following themes treated in the Annex (in preparation)

- 1) What about the exterior form of baptism?
- 2) Immersion or sprinkling?
- 3) Is baptism only for adults?
- 4) Does the ceremony of Christian baptism give salvation?



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 2

A. Review the homework and experiences of last week

- 1) What experiences have you had this week, especially in trying to listen to the voice of Jesus every day.
- 2) Do you remember the verse from the lesson we studied?
- 3) How can you explain to a new believer the difference between the baptism of the Spirit and Christian baptism?

B. Assurance of Salvation

- 4) Do you think that the 3000 listeners that were baptized that day also received the Holy Spirit?

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- 5) Do you think you received the Holy Spirit? Why or why not? Remember what the key verse says.

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- 6) Are you sure you will go to heaven if you die today?

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- 7) If so, why do you think God will accept you?

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- 8) If not, do you have an idea why you lack this certainty?

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- 9) If you are not conscious of a specific reason, consider the following point:

Salvation is linked to Christ

- 10) To be saved, is it sufficient to believe in Jesus as you believe in all the other prophets? Why not?

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- 11) Why is only Jesus capable of settling the question of our sin?

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12) Do you truly believe that Jesus is all that we have just said?

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13) Have you repented? Have you believed?

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14) On what do you now base your assurance of salvation? On what you have done or on what Jesus has done?

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C. Learn to clarify the Gospel

15) From Peter, we can learn how to make the Gospel clear to those around us. What misunderstandings did he remove when he spoke to the crowd? (Acts 2:15)?

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16) Do you see misunderstandings that you could remove in those around you about Christianity?

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17) On what points was Peter unwilling to compromise?

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18) Once the misunderstandings are taken away, can you see on what points you must not compromise?

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19) Reflect on how your baptism can serve those around you to remove misunderstandings and make known the good news of salvation.

D. Homework for next time

- Memorize the key verse.
- Reinforce the link with Jesus every day.
- Search for possibilities to clarify and share the Gospel with those around you.



Lesson ③: Baptism, the Sign of the New Covenant

Or: How did God make the church understand that they were now in the New Covenant?

Introduction

After the birth of the Christian Church at Pentecost, the Christians met daily at the temple, and in their houses.

In your own words, why didn't the first Christians feel the need to meet in a new "Christian" temple, a place that didn't belong to the Jewish religion?

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During his last supper with the twelve apostles, Jesus told them:

"This cup is my blood of the New Covenant, poured out for you." Luke 22:20

But He could not explain fully at that moment.



Read the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 and 11.



At Jerusalem, did Peter forbid Christian parents to circumcise their children from now on?

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Were they told that they had to eat meat or pork?

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According to Acts 11:19-26, whom did the church in Jerusalem send to the Greek believers in Antioch?

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Where are the disciples called "Christians" for the first time?

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Key Verse: Colossians 2:10-12

¹⁰ *You have been given fullness in Christ*

who is the head over every power and authority.

¹¹ *In him you have also been circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ,*

¹² *having been buried with him in baptism, and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*



When the apostle Paul affirms that Jesus is the head of all dominion and all authority, what is He talking about? Use Col 2:8 and 2:18 to help you respond.



According to verse 11, why is the circumcision of Christ, not done by human hands, superior to the Old Covenant?



What is this “circumcision not done by human hands”?



It is not the ceremony of baptism that saves. How do we see that expressed in these verses?

The exterior gesture of baptism is insufficient, just as the exterior gesture of circumcision was insufficient in the Old Covenant:

“So, circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the Lord your God is the God of gods... who does not show partiality.” Deut. 10:16-17

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT: A COMPARISON

The sign of the Old Covenant was circumcision.

The Law of Moses was given by God. It was an integral part of the Old Covenant and was composed of three parts:

- 1) The moral law of God, including the 10 commandments.
- 2) The ceremonial law that showed with its symbolism the necessity and nature of redemption, as with the laws of purity and sacrifices.
- 3) The civil law of the Jewish people, chosen by God to be the human family of the Messiah.

The sign of the New Covenant is Christian Baptism.

The Law of Moses has therefore been fulfilled by Jesus:

- 1) The moral law: we can now fulfil it because Jesus lives in us by His Spirit. The Sermon on the Mount aims at this goal.
- 2) The ceremonial law is now superfluous, and we can therefore leave it as the Jewish Christians have learned to do under the sovereign direction of God Himself. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows us this.
- 3) The civil law no longer applies because in the New Covenant, the people of God are not made up of the Jewish people in a physical place but are formed by the universal Church of Christ all over the world. The Epistle to the Romans explains this.

Conclusion

By being baptised, we declare that we accept the New Covenant. According to Colossians 2:10, we declare that in Christ we have all been brought to fullness. We confess that He is above all authority and power that reigns in the world.

In Col 2:6, Paul tells us to walk in Christ in the same way that we have received Him: by faith. Our initial conversion to Christ is only the beginning of this walk. Each time we become conscious of something which we have not yet submitted to Him, this is a time to trust Him to change us.



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 3

A. Review the homework and experiences of last week.

- 1) Can you share some experience of the past week that is related to your walk with God or to your preparation for baptism or ask some question that has come to your mind?
- 2) Do you remember the key verse from the third lesson? Can you share the most important point for you?

B. Baptism symbolizes the New Covenant

- 3) If you are baptized, you place yourself under the sign of the New Covenant. What does this mean for you?
- 4) God Himself instituted the Old Covenant with the circumcision of Abraham and with the Law of Moses. Why do we need the New Covenant?
- 5) According to Col 2:11, what does the New Covenant do for us that the old regime was incapable of doing?

.....

.....

C. What to do with the signs of the Old Covenant?

The moral law of God remains valuable for all time, and Jesus fulfils it perfectly because he loved God and His neighbour with all His heart.

- 6) Can you give an example of a moral law that remains valid for us also?

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.....

.....

The ceremonial Law of Moses is symbolic, now fulfilled and therefore obsolete.

- 7) Can you recognize the ceremonial customs in Islam that resemble the Law of Moses?

.....

.....

The civil law of Moses applied to the people of Israel whom God had chosen as His visible people in a visible territory to be the bearer of the Messiah. In the New Covenant, God declared that now His people are made up of those whom Jesus has baptized with his Spirit, making them become children of God.

- 8) Do the civil laws still apply?

.....

- 9) According to Gal 3:23-25, what is the role of the law? (See also Rom 7:7.)

.....

D. Renounce influences that keep us from the fullness of God.

The Christians at Colossae were good believers. In spite of that, Paul writes them a letter to persuade them to watch out for two influences that can remove the fullness that God has given us in the New Covenant in Christ. These two influences are:

- **The philosophies of this world. (Col. 2:8-9)**

10) Can you identify which worldly philosophies have influenced your way of thinking in the past?

.....

.....

11) Have you renounced them? What evidence do you have that you have or have not done so? What step might you still need to take?

.....

.....

- **The principalities and powers of this world (Col. 2:15-18)**

12) Can you identify spiritual powers that influence your life?

13) Make a list of all the contacts you have had with the spiritual world that God has forbidden and clearly renounce them, if necessary with the help of someone experienced in this domain.

E. Questions of conscience and of Christian liberty...

14) Did Peter return to Jerusalem (after his experience with Cornelius) with the purpose of founding an anti-Jewish, anti-circumcision, anti-law church now?

.....

15) Why not?

.....

.....

.....

16) Did the Jewish Christians continue their religious practices as before?

.....

.....

17) What can you conclude for your situation?

.....

.....

F. Homework for next week

- Memorize the key verse.
- Complete the list of things that the candidate feels they need to renounce. Pray for the Lord to reveal these things, because it is not always evident.



Lesson ④: Baptism Unites Us with Christ in His Death.

Or: How a person benefits from the death and resurrection of Christ.

Introduction



Perhaps you have been asking how to know if or when one is truly ready for baptism. Do you need to wait for a certain moment or experience to be baptized?



Do you need to pass a certain test of knowledge of the Bible or attain a certain reputation among Christians?



Did the apostles give rules?



Does the Bible show us how to do it?



Read the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40.



What details do we learn about this man?



Read Acts 8:32-33 and Isaiah 53:7-12 together.



In your own words, who is the prophet talking about?



What do these verses tell us about Him? See especially the last half of verse 11.

In this Old Testament passage, we see a clear explanation of one of the key meanings of baptism: cleansing from sin. Earlier in this same passage in Isa 52:15 we read *“So shall He sprinkle many nations.”* Sprinkling was used in the Old Testament Law to ceremonially cleanse from sin or impurity (Numbers 8:7, Ezekiel 6:25). The Apostle Peter would later write describing baptism as cleansing: *“not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21).*



What do you suppose Philip would have explained about Jesus and how to benefit from his sacrifice? (What would *you* say to explain to someone reading this passage seeking to understand and to be right with God like this eunuch?)



Why do you think Philip took the decision to baptize this man?



Does the text indicate how one can recognize a person's readiness for baptism?

Key Verse: Rom. 6:3-4

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
have been baptized into His death?*

*Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,
so we too might walk in newness of life.*



According to this verse, is it possible to have been baptized without having fully realized our identification with Christ in His death?



If this is the case, should we be baptized again?

Conclusion

It is right and necessary to present baptism as our union with Christ in His death. It is also necessary to await the reaction of faith in another and to verify that their life gives evidence of that faith. But there are no rules, no exam, nor any trial period prescribed in the Bible. The baptismal candidate will be baptized according to his/her confession of faith.



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 4

A. Review the homework and experiences of last week

- 1) Do you have the impression of living under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant? Why?
- 2) Do you remember the key verse?

B. Understand our own shortcomings to be able to benefit from the death of Jesus

- 3) Does the Ethiopian give you the impression of being a good man or a sinful man?
.....
- 4) Are people with good moral conduct like him able to be saved without the Gospel?
Verify your response with Eph 2:8-9.
.....
- 5) According to Col 2:11 and Rom 6:6, why do we need Jesus? Is it only to take away our evil deeds, or is it more than that on the cross?
.....
.....
- 6) Is there anything in our old nature worth keeping and improving? Must we deliver *everything* to death or not?
.....
.....
- 7) Do you want Jesus to take only your sin to the cross or all of your old nature?
.....
.....

C. How to benefit concretely from the resurrection of Christ

- 8) Baptism identifies us with Christ, and all that He did for us. We now belong to Him by rights. We benefit from this reality to the extent that we take hold of all this for our particular situation by faith. Do you still experience attitudes and practices that belonged to the old nature?
.....
.....
- 9) Is this a sign that Jesus has not taken my old life on the cross?
.....
- 10) How must I react to benefit from my new life in Christ?
.....
.....

D. The responsibility of the baptismal candidate

- 11) Is the decision to be baptized a matter for the church or the candidate?
.....

12) In Acts 8: 35-38, is Philip or the Ethiopian the one responsible?

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13) Why does Philip ask the Ethiopian for a confession of faith?

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14) On what confession of faith was the Ethiopian baptized?

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15) The Ethiopian recognised that Jesus was the one whom the Old Testament had predicted, and he acknowledged the necessity of being united with Christ. Why is this confession essential?

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16) What does this new confession add to the Old Covenant?

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17) The Ethiopian appears to have a great desire to be united with Christ in his death and resurrection through baptism. Does union with Jesus appear to be just as desirable to you, or not? And why?

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E. Homework for next time

- Memorize the key verse / review the other verses.
- Make a mental list of what characterized your old life in the flesh.
- Make a mental list of what characterizes my new life in Christ.
- Thank Jesus for having exchanged your old life for His life.

Key Verses

Matt. 28:18-20

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;

and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

1 Cor. 12:13

*Indeed, we all were baptized in a single Spirit to form only one body,
in which we are Jewish or Greek, slaves or free men.
It is of this same Spirit we have all received to drink.*

Col. 2:10-12

*And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;
and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,
in the putting the flesh to death by the circumcision of Christ;
having been buried with Him in baptism,
in which you were also raised up with Him
through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

Rom. 6:3-4

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
have been baptized into His death?
Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,
so, we too might walk in newness of life.*



Lesson ⑤: Baptism, the Sign of Our New Common Identity

Or: How Jesus makes us enter into the Universal and Local Church

Introduction

Christ is the only one who can cause a person to be born anew by His Holy Spirit and make them in this way part of the universal family of God. One day, we will see in heaven who really entered His family. But in the meantime, Jesus wants His disciples to visibly bring believers into visible families of God's children around the world. These are the local churches (Matt 28:18-20). Today, we will see how God not only wants to give us a new, invisible, spiritual identity, but also a new, visible, common identity.



Read the story of the Roman Jailer in Acts 16:11-40.

Read again Acts 16:11-31.



What did Paul and Silas say to him?



Why didn't Paul speak to him of repentance? Wasn't repentance necessary for him to be saved?



Compare this response to that of Peter in Acts 2:38. Why this difference?

Understand the contrast:

According to these two texts, repentance and faith both have their place in the process of salvation. Baptism also symbolizes both.



How do we understand the expression: "you will be saved, you and your family"?

Read again the end of the story in Acts 16:32-40.**Key verse**

This verse gives us an example of how belonging to the church is expressed in practice.

Heb. 10:24-25.

*Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some,
but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*



According to the verse, try to deduce what it means to belong to a local church:

– *“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”*

.....

– *“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some.”*

.....

-- *“Let us encourage each other; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”*

.....

-- *“So, the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”* Acts 16:5



Why does attending a local church make up an integral part of the life of a Christian?

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Conclusion

Baptism implies not only the change of heart that identifies with Christ, but also the exterior change that identifies the Christian with the disciples of Christ.

In other words, identification with Christ not only unites us with the universal, invisible Church, but it also gets us to unite with the local, visible church of Christ. It matters little if this church is well or poorly formed, or very imperfect!

Christ’s local church expresses this union in a practical way, through our relationships with other Christians. The church becomes a new family.



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 5

A. Review the homework and experiences of last week

- 1) Union with Christ includes union in His death. Is it really indispensable and why? Respond with the help of Rom 7:18.

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- 2) Union with Christ includes His resurrected life. Do you have this life? If not, why not? What is hindering?

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- 3) Review the last key verse, Rom 6:3-4. Also review the other verses.

B. Lessons from the first saints in the Philippian Church in Acts 16

- 4) How did Paul know that the following people had become members of the universal, invisible Church of Christ?

- Lydia

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- The jailor

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- 5) This was not enough for Paul. How did he encourage them to become visible local Christian churches?

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- 6) What role did baptism play in all of this?

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- 7) Describe what it must have been like for Lydia and the jailer and their households to have a new identity as believers in Christ.

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- 8) Can you describe your new identity as you commit yourself to Christ? Who are you in His eyes?

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.....

C. How to become a member of the universal, invisible body of Christ

9) According to Rom 8:9, is Christian baptism what makes us become members of the universal Church?

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10) According to Romans 8:16-17 and 29, what is my new identity and what results does it produce?

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D. How to become a member of the local, visible body of Christ

11) In Acts 16:13-15, what does the attitude of Lydia teach us, in her commitment to the local church of Christ?

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12) How do you intend to be part not only of the invisible but also the visible local church?

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E. How to live our union in the body of Christ practically

13) Do you remember the three elements of the key verse?

14) How do you intend to put Hebrews 10:25a into practice?

- Give some examples of your regularity at meetings.
- Give some examples of your communication with brothers and sisters in Christ.

15) Is there already a group of believers in Jesus that recognizes you as someone who is committed to regularly meet and who communicates sufficiently for them to know you and to be known?

F. Homework for next time

- Memorize Heb. 10:24-25



Lesson ⑥: The Lord's Supper, Second Ordinance of the New Covenant

Or: how baptism and the Lord's Supper complement each other

Introduction

The sacraments, or ordonnances, have a prominent place in the life of the Church. Before departing from his disciples, Jesus established two ceremonies for the building up and blessing of the Church until his return: baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are not magical but symbolic in nature. They are signs of God's grace and represent the true spiritual reality that God works in the life of the believer in Jesus Christ.

Baptism represents entry into the body of Christ through Spirit baptism by faith; it is only done once. The Lord's Supper bears witness to the communion of Christ and His Body (the Church); it is practiced regularly. In this way, many churches only offer the Lord's Supper to those who have had Christian baptism as adults or who have received it as children and have confirmed later that they now believe personally in its meaning.

KEY MEANINGS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

① THE LORD'S SUPPER IS FIRST OF ALL A COMMEMORATION OF CHRIST'S DEATH FOR US.



Read Luke 22:14-20.

The three evangelists, Mathew (26:26-29), Mark (14:22-25) and Luke (22:14-20), tell us how Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, the night before His death on the cross.



How was the last Passover accomplished?

② THE LORD'S SUPPER REMINDS US THAT OUR LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON CHRIST. Jesus is the Bread of Life, according to John 6:23-63.

Well before his death, Jesus had already spoken of the spiritual reality of the Lord's Supper.

Jesus told them: "(v.26) you seek Me... because you ate of the loaves and were filled...(v.27) Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you... (v.51) I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.... (v.54) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life... (v.56) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. "



What would you have thought, if you had been one of the Jews listening?

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What do you think Jesus wanted to make understood by saying it would be necessary to eat His flesh and drink His blood?

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Jesus told them: *"It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life."* (v63)



Read 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

③

THE LORD'S SUPPER HELPS US UNDERSTAND OUR COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? v16

④

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A CELEBRATION OF OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH.

"Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." 1 Cor 10:17

"But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment on himself." (11:28-29)



Why does Paul say we need to discern the body of Christ without mentioning the blood?

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Dividing the bread of the Lord's Supper together symbolically demonstrates that we belong to one body, and we must do so in a worthy manner, respecting all our brothers and sisters.

He who does not discern the communal nature of the Lord's Supper is exposed to a judgment. It is important to help nonbelievers to discern that the Lord's Supper is for Christians (preferably baptized) and not for everyone.



According to 1 Cor 11:28-31, how can one judge oneself?

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.....

The Lord's Supper is offered to all those who have believed and repented, and it can be a powerful occasion for reconciliation between God and men.

Key Verse

Key Verse: John 6:56

I Am the Bread of Life.

*He who comes to Me will not hunger,
and he who believes in Me will never thirst.*

Conclusion

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two sacraments given by Jesus to His Church.

A sacrament is a sacred act, meant to help us claim spiritual realities by faith.

Jesus ordained baptism as a public witness to once and for all be our identification with Him in His death and resurrection. In addition, He gave us the Lord's Supper as a repetitive act so that we would constantly be reminded of His sacrifice for us. In remembrance of Christ, the Lord's Supper is the occasion to commemorate His death for us and declare our communion with Him, even as our belonging to His body which is the Church.



Personal Follow-up for Lesson 6

A. Review the homework and experiences of last week

- 1) Are your relations with your brothers and sisters in Christ going in the right direction, according to Hebrews 10:24-25? Have you been able to establish a good contact with the group you have joined?
- 2) Do you remember the key verses?

B. The Lord' Supper, sign of the New Covenant

- 3) When Jesus had given the cup of wine to his disciples, He said it was the cup of the Covenant. According to Luke 22:20, was He speaking of the Old or New Covenant?

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.....

- 4) When God proposes a Covenant, are you making a covenant with God, or is He making an alliance with you? Is it like a contract or a negotiation of conditions?

.....

.....

C. The essence of the Lord's Supper

- 5) Give at least three meanings of the Lord's Supper.

1)

2)

3)

D. How to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Jesus

- 6) Did Jesus speak of eating His flesh and drinking His blood only through the Lord's Supper?

.....

- 7) According to John 6:63, did Jesus speak of His physical flesh and His blood, or did He speak of a spiritual reality?

.....

.....

- 8) Does the Lord's Supper have magic power that transmits this spiritual reality, or is it rather a symbol, our act of faith being what permits us to be nourished by His real presence?

.....

.....

9) Is this act of faith exclusively linked to the Lord's Supper?

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.....

E. How we must examine ourselves before the Lord's Supper.

10) According to 1 Cor 11:20-34, why did Paul reproach the Corinthians for taking the Lord's Supper unworthily?

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11) If I realize that taking the Lord's Supper contradicts my behaviour, what do I need to do?

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.....

12) What are the consequences if I don't take these instructions into account?

.....

.....

F. Conclusion

13) Are you ready to examine yourself as the Bible says?

14) Is there anything you need to rectify before being able to take the Lord's Supper?

15) If someone asks you how God has prepared you for the day of your baptism, what would you say?

G. Homework

- Memorize the key verse
- Examine whether you are ready for the Lord's Supper, and if there is still something to be put in order, do it right away.
- Make a brief summary of your testimony, oral or written, so that you will be able to give it to others who are present for the happy occasion of your baptism!
- Organize the baptism ceremony with your future church group.
- Answer the questionnaire that reviews the first six lessons.

If you are ready for the Lord's Supper, you are ready for Baptism.

Rejoice!



Questionnaire to review this baptism course

(To be done after the sixth lesson)

A. First Lesson: Why baptize?

- 1) Why be baptized?

- 2) How did Jesus himself make the disciples understand the necessity of baptism?
 - Story:

 - Key Verse:

 - Remarks, Questions, Doubts:

B. Second Lesson: The first Christian baptism in history

- 3) How did Jesus baptize his own the first time (in Acts 2)?

- 4) How did the apostles baptise the first time (in Acts 2)?

- 5) What did Peter ask as conditions for baptism?
 - Story:

 - Key Verse:

 - Remarks, Questions, Doubts:

C. Third Lesson: Baptism symbolizes the New Covenant

- 6) How did God make the disciples understand that they were now in the New Covenant?

- 7) What does it mean for us now that we are under the New Covenant as opposed to the Old Covenant?
 - Story:

 - Key Verse:

- Remarks, Questions, Doubts:

D. Fourth Lesson Baptism: identification with Christ in His death

8) How are we united with Christ in His death and resurrection?

9) Who is responsible for baptism?

- Story:

- Key Verse:

- Remarks, Questions, Doubts:

E. Fifth Lesson: Baptism as the sign of our new common identity

10) How do we become members of the family of God, of the invisible universal Church?

11) How do we become members of the visible local church?

- Story:

- Key Verse:

- Remarks, Questions, Doubts:

F. Sixth Lesson: The Lord's Supper as the sign of our new common identity

12) What are the key meanings associated with the Lord's Supper?

13) How do Baptism and the Lord's Supper complement each other and benefit the believer?

- Story:

- Key Verse:

- Remarks, Questions, Doubts:



Lesson ⑦: How to Prepare Your Testimony

Or: The natural development of the Apostle Paul's testimony



Read Acts 26:1-23.

① THE INTRODUCTION OF PAUL (ACTS 26:2-3)

- Paul addresses his listeners. Who are they?
- What is the context of his testimony?
- How does he adapt it to such an audience?

My introduction



To whom will I give my testimony?



Prepare an appropriate introduction.

② PAUL'S PAST (ACTS 26: 4-11)

Paul spoke of his youth, of his family and religious environments. He mentioned his religion, his zeal, his wandering, his blindness, etc.

My past



Speak of your past in the same way. Mention your spiritual or religious state, your zeal or indifference, your hardening, or your search, wandering, blindness, thirst, etc.

③ PAUL'S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST (ACTS 26: 12-18)

Paul recounts the circumstances which brought him to his encounter with Christ: his state of spirit, how Christ grabbed his attention, how his spirit (heart) was illuminated, and his response.

My encounter with Christ



What are the circumstances that led you to your encounter with Christ? Mention the state of your spirit, how Christ grabbed your attention, how He illuminated your heart, and what your response was.



What were the first contacts you had with the Gospel?



What role was played by the Bible, Christians, parents, prayer, etc.?



What person had the most influence on you to come to Christ?

④ **CONCLUSION: PAUL PRESENTS THE GOSPEL (ACTS 26:19-23)**

Paul summarized the Gospel for his audience so that they could also receive Christ as their Saviour.

What elements of the Gospel message does he mention? (Check the appropriate responses.)

- ☐ Jesus is the Christ (King-Messiah) promised in the Old Testament
- ☐ He died as the sacrifice for the sins of the world
- ☐ He rose from the dead on the third day, and He reigns as Lord.
- ☐ He appears to the disciples who are his witnesses.
- ☐ All (Jews and non-Jews) must repent of their works and believe in Him to receive eternal salvation.

My presentation of the Gospel

Prepare to do it yourself.

Think about those who will hear your message, about their particular needs for understanding the Gospel. Depending on the time that you have and the results you want to achieve, you can present the entire message or certain specific elements of the Gospel.

Back your message through your personal experience, but also citing the Bible. Maybe you can use the verse or biblical passage which you have spoken the most when you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

