



Baptism is normative in the life of the church. It appears repeatedly in the book of Acts as part of one's conversion story. To receive baptism as an act of faith in Jesus as our way of "calling on His name" is to swim with the stream of church history.

These questions are intended to deepen your experience of the message. Use them for your personal or family study time, or with an open Bible as you share the good news with your neighbor.

Group Ice-Breaker:

Which of these best describes the reason you were baptized into Christ:

(A) To imitate or follow Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)?

(B) To accept/receive the rich blessings and promises described by the Apostle Paul (Romans 6:1-8)?

(C) To respond to the gospel according to the pattern described in Acts (Acts 2:38-41)?

**THREE STREAMS.** The Eastern church emphasized baptism as imitation of Jesus (Matt 3:13-17). The Western church focused on Paul's language of inclusion and incorporation into Christ (Rom 6:1-8). Restoration churches (Churches of Christ/Christian Church/Disciples of Christ) emphasized the pattern of conversion stories in the book of Acts (Acts 2:36-41). Discuss.

**THE PROMISE TO ISRAEL.** Read Joel 2:18-32. God promises to restore his people (Israel), allowing all who "call upon the name of the Lord"—even if far off—to be saved. Peter says this is fulfilled on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-21). Read Acts 2:21. If this is true, why does the crowd ask "what shall we do" (Acts 2:37)? Discuss. Read Acts 2:38 & 22:16. Do these passages suggest that repentance and baptism is how (or where) we call on the name of the Lord? Read Acts 2:36-41. Notice the elements included: gospel, conviction, faith, repentance, baptism, forgiveness, Spirit, and entrance into the community of faith. Many NT scholars claim this story is normative or programmatic for conversion stories. Discuss. Nathan said "The New Testament assumes all Christians are baptized Christians." Discuss.

**THE PROMISE TO EUNUCHS.** Read Isaiah 56:3-5 & Acts 8:26-40. The Queen's treasurer was a eunuch from Ethiopia. If he were to join Judaism, there would be barriers to his full inclusion (Lev 21:20; Deut 23:1). How is Jesus different? Notice that Philip started at Isaiah 53 and "preached Jesus." How does the eunuch respond to this preaching? Discuss.

**THE PROMISE TO SAMARITANS.** Read Acts 8:4-8, 8:14-17. Jews considered themselves separate from Samaritans and Gentiles (Matt 10:5). It was shocking to even consider a "good" Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). But the gospel is to be witnessed not just in Jerusalem but also in Samaria (Acts 1:8). How do the Samaritans respond to the gospel? Why is the order different?

**THE PROMISE TO GENTILES.** Read Acts 10:34-48. What elements are included in this conversion story of Gentiles? Why is the order different? Does Acts 11:1-18 help explain why?

**THE PROMISE TO MEN & WOMEN, SLAVE & FREE.** Read Acts 16:11-15 (women), & Acts 16:16-34 (prison story). Read Gal 3:26-29.