

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 6: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Christian Life and Worldview. This series of lessons examines the choices and practices that are essential for Christian living. To live as the Word of God teaches us means we understand that the choices we make each day affect our faith. It also means learning to pray, practising the commands of God and learning to serve others. These are important lessons for understanding the practice of Christianity and how to live out our faith within our Church community.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

LESSON 6: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Baptism and Communion are important sacred practices for Christians. This lesson will help you understand when and how they take place, and their purpose in the life of the Church.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Baptism and Communion are two sacred actions that are practised by almost all Christians worldwide. Both are explained in the Bible and were commanded by Jesus. It is important to note that there are a wide variety of approaches to both baptism and communion within the Church which at times has caused division. Some may practise baptism by sprinkling rather than full water immersion. Some may use multiple small cups for communion and wafers of bread, while others may choose a common loaf and cup. However, we usually agree on their importance and their significance to the believer and the Church.

GETTING STARTED

1. Do you have any memento that helps you remember someone who is no longer in your life? Do certain times of the year or situations remind you of them? Why do we try to remember those who are no longer in our life?

2. How do shared experiences help a group grow closer? What is a shared experience in the life of your family or group of co-workers that has brought you together?



STUDY

❖ **CHRIST SACRIFICED FOR US:** Baptism and communion are two things that serve to remind us of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Both are commanded by God and both are intended to draw believers together as one body in obedience and worship. As such, Satan has worked hard to create divisions among believers on these subjects, and as a result, there are many debates about how to practise each. Here we will consider what the Bible has to say about their significance and what Jesus instructed believers to do.

❖ **BAPTISM:**

- **Definition**– A public proclamation of a person’s decision to follow Christ, and a symbolic expression of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.
- **Significance** – Baptism is a sign of the new covenant. Our baptism demonstrates that we now belong to Jesus Christ. It is an outward act of washing that symbolizes becoming clean inside. It signifies a change, that we have died to our old sin, risen with Christ to live a new life, and been made clean through God’s forgiveness of our sin.
- Read the following verses to see what the Bible says about Baptism:

Romans 6:1-4	
Colossians 2:12	
Mark 16:16	
Acts 22:16	

- **Method** – Churches choose to practise baptism in various ways. Many immerse a person completely or partially in water and bring them up out of the water. This symbolizes their death to sin and resurrection to life by faith in Christ. This is usually a public demonstration, where appropriate. Other churches sprinkle or pour water on the head. Individuals may be baptized by clergy, an elder, or another believer, depending on the church tradition.
- **Who Is It For?** – Some churches reserve baptism for adults or youth who are able to make a confession of faith before others. This is referred to as ‘believer’s baptism.’ Some Church traditions choose to baptise infants as a sign of bringing them up in the covenant of God.



❖ **JESUS' BAPTISM:** John the Baptist was a messenger appointed by God to prepare the way for Jesus. He had been telling the people in Jerusalem that the Messiah was coming and they needed to repent of their sins and be baptized.

➤ Read Matthew 3 to understand the story of Jesus' own baptism.

What did the people do when they were baptized? (Verse 5-6)	
What did Jesus ask John to do, and what was John's response? (verse 15)	
What happened after Jesus was baptized? (verse 16-17)	

John was willing to baptize Jesus, although he felt that Jesus was his superior. It might seem strange that Jesus was baptized, especially since this was a baptism of repentance from sin. Jesus wanted to show approval of John's message, and allow John to identify Jesus as the one whom he had prophesied about. Jesus also wanted to demonstrate obedience.

❖ **BAPTISM AND BELIEF:** The book of Acts shows many examples of individuals who were baptized. In these cases, the baptism took place at any body of water available, shortly after belief. It was a sign to demonstrate the change that had taken place within them.

➤ Read the following accounts of baptisms, and write down what you learn.

Acts 8: 9-13	
Acts 8:26-40	
Acts 16: 11-15	



❖ **COMMUNION / THE LORD'S SUPPER:** The dinner where Jesus instituted communion is called the Last Supper. The Last Supper was Jesus' final meal with the Disciples before He was arrested and nailed to the cross. The word 'communion' does not occur in the Bible, but it is what we have come to call the act of taking bread and wine together in remembrance of Jesus.

- **Definition:** Communion, also called the Lord's Supper (as in 1 Corinthians 11:20), is a practice that represents the Lord's Last Supper with His twelve Disciples. It is symbolic of Christ's death on the cross for the sins of humanity. Christ commanded believers to do this together in remembrance of Him.
- **Significance:** Jesus said that communion was a symbol of the new covenant, and it is to be observed with other believers, solemnly, in remembrance of Christ. Read the following verses and write down what the symbols mean. (Matthew 26:26-28)

- **Method:** Some churches will have a common cup of wine and a loaf of bread that is shared among all the members. People come to the front of the worship centre to take a sip of the wine and a piece of the bread, or the cup and loaf are passed around the room from person to person. Alternatively, small individual cups of wine and wafers of unleavened bread are sometimes used, especially in larger groups. Substitutions are sometimes made for the bread or wine (for instance, the use of juice) according to local tradition.
- **Who Is It For?** Communion is for believers in Jesus Christ, any who are old enough to understand the significance of it. Some church groups may restrict communion to those who have been baptized, or those who are official members at that church.
- Read Matthew 26:17-29. What do we learn about this practice of communion?

- The Apostle Paul warns us about taking communion if our relationship with God is not in good standing. According to the Bible, how should a group of believers practise communion? How should they properly prepare themselves before taking it? (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

OBEDIENCE: Baptism and communion provide opportunities for us to obey the commandments of God, to become one with other believers, and to draw nearer to God.



IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Baptism and communion remind us of Christ's sacrifice for us. Both are commanded by God and both are intended to draw believers together as one body in obedience and worship.
- ❖ Baptism is a public proclamation of a person's decision to follow Christ, and a symbolic expression of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- ❖ Baptism may be carried out in various ways by different church groups.
- ❖ Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist.
- ❖ Communion is a practice that represents the Last supper. It is symbolic of Christ's death on the cross for the sins of humanity.
- ❖ Christ commanded believers to take communion together in remembrance of Him.
- ❖ Baptism and communion provide opportunities for us to obey the commandments of God, to become one with other believers, and to draw nearer to God.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What has been your experience with communion? If you are part of a church community, how is it practised? How often do you observe it?

2. Have you proclaimed your faith in Jesus by following the instruction of baptism? Have you had the opportunity to see others baptised?

3. Who should participate in communion? How is communion different from simply taking a meal with others? What makes it symbolic?