

Foundations – Baptism/Discipleship

Identity - "I am a branch of the true vine."

I. The Great Commission

- Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. _____ therefore and _____ of all nations, _____ in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, _____ all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (ESV)

II. Baptism

A. What is baptism? Let’s study the Word...

- Acts 2:37-41 - Peter’s instruction to the first converts to Christianity
- Repent and be _____.
- The peoples’ obedience to baptism was _____.
- Matthew 3:13-17 - Jesus’ baptism is one of the few stories recorded in each of the 4 Gospels
- Jesus says, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all _____.”
- “Jesus _____ from the water.” (Immersion vs. Sprinkling)
- God spoke _____ that He was _____ with Jesus’ action.
- The Holy Spirit _____ Jesus here, thus _____ His ministry.

B. Symbols of baptism

- Dead to sin and alive in Christ (Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12)
- A pledge/sign of obedience (1 Peter 3:18-22)

C. More Controversies: Baby Baptisms and Who is Allowed to Baptize?

- Other examples of baptism: Acts 8:26-40, Acts 9:17-19, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:31-34, Acts 18:7-8

III. Discipleship

- The essence of discipleship: Philippians 4:9 - “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (ESV)

	Character	Needs	Offerings
Baby	Inwardly focused	Feeding, nurturing, lots of attention, diaper changes	Joy, beauty, cuteness
Child	Mainly focused inwardly	Provision, protection, guidance, discipline	Joy, serve in small things
Teenager	Crossroads: can turn out great or fall apart	Guidance but also a degree of trust, discipline, life experience	More responsibility can be taken
Adult	Serving, providing, leading	Purpose (work!), rest	Experienced, confident, able to serve
Elder	Background figure but important	Very little (unless health fails)	Wisdom, counsel

- Kingdom Perspective:
- James 5:16 and accountability:

IV. New Identities!

- I am a branch of the true vine (John 15:5):
- I am part of the body of Christ (1Corinthians 12:27):

V. Small Group Questions

- 1) Read Acts 9:18-19. Saul had been blind for three days and hadn't had anything to eat or drink (Acts 9:9). When does Saul eat, before or after being baptized? Why is baptism so important?
- 2) Where do you feel you are in your spiritual maturity? Where do you feel you're lacking the most?
- 3) Read 2 Timothy 2:2. Timothy is charged to choose his disciples wisely. What do you think are some of the needed attributes for a person being disciplined? What mindset should they have?
- 4) What does being a "branch of the true vine" mean to you? How should this identity challenge you?
- 5) What are the 14 identities we have covered so far? What does each mean for us?

Memory Verse of the Week –

Foundations – Baptism/Discipleship (Master)

Identity - "I am a branch of the true vine."

I. The Great Commission

- Matthew 28:18-20 – “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (ESV)

II. Baptism

A. What is baptism? Let's study the Word...

Baptism is a very controversial subject in the church and has separated many denominations. Rather than teach based on a certain denomination or opinion, I think it is better for us to look directly at the Word.

- Acts 2:37-41 - Peter's instruction to the first converts to Christianity
- Repent and be baptized.
- The peoples' obedience to baptism was immediate.

In every story of conversion in the book of Acts, baptism IMMEDIATELY follows. New believers did not wait to be baptized. There was no level of maturity or special class or work that had to be done to be baptized. New believers were expected to be baptized immediately.

- Matthew 3:13-17 - Jesus' baptism is one of the few stories recorded in each of the 4 Gospels
- Jesus says, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

Jesus makes it clear here that baptism is a step of obedience for followers of God. Although Jesus had no sin, He still chose to be baptized in order to be the perfect example for all who will believe.

- “Jesus went up from the water.” (Immersion vs. Sprinkling)

Immersion vs. sprinkling is one of the big controversies with baptism. In many denominations and churches, baptism is done through water sprinkling rather than immersion. These denominations point to many Scripture in the Old Testament where objects were made holy by “sprinkling” of blood. They also argue that it would have been very hard for people in the New Testament to find rivers immediately after being saved and were likely instead to be sprinkled in their houses. Other denominations, specifically Baptists, are adamant that believers should be immersed (go all the way under) into the water. They point to the wording done in baptisms as signaling that the believer came out of the water. They also point to how baptism is a symbol to us dying to sin and being raised in Christ, as we will cover later. At any rate, most Christians are willing to concede that what is most important are the heart and the obedience to the task.

- God spoke vocally that He was pleased with Jesus' action.

God doesn't speak from heaven often in the New Testament. He usually leaves Jesus or the Holy Spirit to speak to someone. But in this instance the Father chooses to speak and make it clear to everyone there that He is pleased. This shows just how important obedience to baptism is.

- The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus here, thus starting His ministry.

In every Gospel, Jesus' ministry does not begin until after He has been baptized. This is also a beautiful moment in Scripture where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each active. As a result of Jesus' obedience in receiving water baptism, He also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This baptism of the Spirit was what gave Him the anointing and power for ministry. We will cover the baptism of the Spirit in a future lesson.

- Symbols of baptism:
 - Dead to sin and alive in Christ (Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12)

Baptism is meant to demonstrate the believer being buried in sin just as Jesus was buried in the tomb after the Crucifixion. The believer being raised up out of the water symbolizes Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We die to sin. We are made alive in Christ. During the process, the water symbolizes us being purified from sin. This symbolism is difficult to demonstrate through sprinkling, but is clear with immersion.

- A pledge/sign of obedience (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Because baptism was meant to happen immediately after a person became a believer, it became a clear sign to people around them that they had become Christians. Just as a wedding is a ceremony that demonstrates that two people are committing themselves to each other and becoming one, so is baptism meant to be a symbol of a person's commitment to God. And just as a marriage commitment is to be taken seriously, so is the commitment of baptism.

B. More Controversies: Baby Baptisms and Who is Allowed to Baptize?

There is no Scripture about babies being baptized. Some denominations teach that if a person is baptized at birth then they are good to go for life. Not much clear reasoning can be found for this.

For those in deliverance/healing ministry though, in some cases of baptizing babies, the babies have been healed of different diseases. It is believed that in the early church it was recognized that babies can be subject to hurt, rejection, and even curses while developing in the womb. Psalm 51:5 says we were "brought forth in iniquity." Because of this, members of the early church would baptize their babies as an act of interceding for the little ones and committing them to God. Today, it is psychologically proven that babies can be emotionally scarred in the womb.

Who is allowed to baptize? Scripture does not make any clear definitions about this. Some churches are adamant that only the pastor may baptize. Other churches believe that any baptized believer is allowed to baptize. In the Gospels, Jesus had His disciples baptize rather than Himself (John 4:2). This was before His disciples had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and commissioned. In Acts 8, a deacon named Philip baptizes many in Samaria. Scripture is unclear about this matter and many denominations differ in thought.

For all of these controversies, it is best to submit to the leadership of your church.

- Other examples of baptism: Acts 8:26-40, Acts 9:17-19, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:31-34, Acts 18:7-8

III. Discipleship

- The essence of discipleship: Philippians 4:9 - “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” (ESV)

	Character	Needs	Offerings
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This chart not only models how a person matures physically, but also spiritually. As people spend time with the Lord they are expected to mature and develop. Many new believers are very inwardly focused, and this is expected because they are new in the faith. They need people to feed them the Word, to take care of them, and to help them through their mistakes. Sadly, many Christians stay in the “child” phase and never develop. They are content to rely on their pastor or spiritual leaders to provide everything, just as children rely on their parents. For many of these Christians, if they are separated from their pastor or leader they will fall away because they are too weak to fight the enemy. But for those who do continue to mature through childhood and into spiritual “adolescence,” they are faced with a lot of tough challenges that will either make their character blessed or a mess. Spiritual adolescence is a critical time for a believer. This is a time when a believer steps out for the first time in leadership or a large serving responsibility. It is critical for the believer to be under solid spiritual authority because this is a time when Satan can either overwhelm the person with pride or with insecurity. The believer will either mature or will fall away.

- Kingdom Perspective:

It is critical for Christians to take the Great Commission to heart and want to develop in their faith. An army of children is no match for the armies of Satan. We need to have a “kingdom perspective.” A kingdom perspective is not looking for earthly satisfaction but heavenly satisfaction. Our investment is in eternity and not in our short life on earth. That means we would rather see God’s kingdom filled with believers than waste our time on earth. With discipleship our desire should always be to make more disciples so that they can make more disciples, thus growing God’s kingdom.

- James 5:16 and accountability:

Discipleship relationships present a great opportunity for transparency and trust. The more we are able to confess with one another, the less of a grip Satan can have on our lives. This will be covered more next week during our study on deliverance and inner healing.

IV. New Identities!

- I am a branch of the true vine (John 15:5):

This is an identity that comes both with a promise and a warning. Jesus says clearly that those who abide in Him will bear much fruit, but those who do not abide in Him are in danger of judgment. By being a branch of the true vine we are plugged into the true source of love, joy, peace, and power. If we simply abide in God, the Lord transforms us.

****Ask**** How do you abide in God? (Word, prayer, fellowship, praise, fasting)

When Jesus told us that He is the vine and we are the branches, He was making it clear to us that He is the source of our life and growth. It's as we seek Him that we are filled with every good thing. To say, "I am a branch of the true vine" means that your reliance is not on yourself or the world, but your reliance is on God. Please repeat after me, "I am a branch of the true vine." Amen!

- I am part of the body of Christ (1Corinthians 12:27):

If we are all children of God, sealed with His Spirit, and belonging to Him, then this means we are in fact one body in Christ. Satan will often attack either our insecurities or our pride and make us think that we are alone. A sheep alone is much easier prey for a wolf. But God makes it clear that no Christian is meant to be alone and that we are all one in Christ. Jesus demonstrated this by making the outcasts (the fishermen, the tax collectors, the zealots) His own disciples and sinners, lepers, and prostitutes His friends. He showed that no matter our personality, our profile, or our past, that in Christ we are accepted and we are called to fellowship together. As every part of the body works together, the body is much more effective. No body part can be effective by itself. By claiming this identity we are stating that we are not alone as Christians and that we truly are accepted and have been made for a purpose. If we feel alone then we are called to seek out Christian fellowship and find the acceptance God promises. If we see other Christians who are alone, we are called to reach out to them and bring them into the body. Please repeat after me, "I am part of the body of Christ." Amen!

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Memory Verse of the Week – John 15:5