

Life Together: God's Pattern – Identification and Testimony

Colossians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

MPS Jesus gave baptism and the Lord's Supper as a testimony to remember and declare the gospel.

OBJ Every person can understand the faithful witness through believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper of every Christ-follower, and the Church.

INTRO Baptism stories in the church remains some of the best stories possible. While serving as a youth pastor in Arkansas, our pastor went to baptize a young man who was nervous about the water. As he went to lay him under the water the man's left arm suddenly flew up and gripped the glass wall next to him. As the pastor tried to submerge him under the water he held the wall and would not go under. This holy ritual turned dance turned wrestling match continued for what seemed a lengthy period, rocking the water of the baptistry pool but with the young man's head never going under water, until finally the pastor raised him up and said, that's good enough. Baptism bloopers makes the best ministry stories.

TRANS Today we will consider baptism and the Lord's Supper as we celebrate and observe both in our services. I have preached on both of these topics a number of times but today I want to approach them in consideration with our current series. Who we are as a church is largely defined by what we do to demonstrate our faith, and this is most important in why and how we celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper. **Why are believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper important for Life Together?**

Jesus gave baptism and the Lord's Supper as a testimony to remember and declare the gospel.

OBJ Four Words tell why Believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper define the faithful witness of every Christ-follower, and the church.

BAPTISM

Believer's baptism is important for the Christian life because of its central role in our witness, for both individual Christian and the church. The key to baptism is its meaning, or that which one identifies with in baptism. Scripture uses the word "baptism" in different ways, but each one refers to a participation by going all in or completely immersed. "Believer's baptism accords with the gospel because it teaches that the objective work of God in salvation necessarily leads to the subjective response of faith."¹ **Believer's baptism displays an outward sign of an inward change, not producing that change, but publicly professing what God has done within by faith through the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Four Biblical Pillars that establish Believer's Baptism.

Pillar #1. Jesus' practiced and commanded Believer's baptism. READ Matt 3:13-17; Matt 28:18-20

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. Matthew 3:13

¹⁹*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" Matthew 28:18-19

Jesus ordained baptism when he submitted to it. He came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River and told him to baptize him, even though John did not want to. Jesus affirmed and completed John's ministry by identifying with it. **Jesus also commanded baptism.** When He gave the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples, he commanded baptism as the first act for a new disciple. **Baptism is a command of Jesus for all those who are His disciples.**

Pillar #2. Believer's baptism is the Biblical Model. Mark 1:9-10; Acts 2:38; 8:12, 38; 10:44-46; 16:14-15; 32-33

Jesus' disciples preached and practiced baptism. Peter's first sermon application was "repent and be baptized"^{Acts 2:38} Throughout the book of Acts we see that as people responded in faith to the Gospel, the Apostles baptized them. Therefore, we know the Scriptures teach that water baptism was not the act of salvation; it occurs as a 'result of' not as the 'cause of' salvation. We also know that immersion was the mode of baptism in the New Testament. The Greek word for "baptize" in

¹Tom Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright. Believer's Baptism: Sign Of The New Covenant In Christ. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), 2.



the New Testament literally means “to immerse, to dip”. One example of this is the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. The way the text speaks of their actions tells us he immersed for baptism, “*and they both went down into the water...when they came up out of the water*”(Acts 8:38, 39).² Of Jesus’ baptism, Matthew 3:16 states that Jesus “*went up from the water*” after his baptism. [Believer’s baptism occurs by immersion once a person has confessed their faith in Jesus as a sign of their salvation, not the cause for it.](#)

Pillar #3. Believer’s baptism was the historical practice of the Early Church

We also know that believer’s baptism was the historical practice of the Apostles and early church leaders. They understood this from Jesus’ example, teaching and command in their own practice. Immersion was the standard practice until much later, historically, when other traditions began to develop. All other views other than believer’s baptism, including infant and paedo-baptism, were developed post-1st century and are established in church traditions. [The early church leaders practiced believer’s baptism for all who trusted in Jesus for salvation.](#)

TRANS The Fourth Pillar addresses our question for today. In commenting on the importance of baptism, one author states, “We’ve made far too little of baptism, not in how we practice or celebrate it, not in what we teach its meaning to be, but rather in what we understand to take place through it.”³ Believer’s baptism is important for Life Together!

Pillar #4. Believer’s baptism fulfills the Biblical purpose of baptism as a “First Act”.

TRANS The Bible provides four reasons that believer’s baptism is important as a Christ-follower’s first act.

First, water baptism represents a spiritual truth as our **first act of identification with the Triune God**. Colossians and Romans explains the significance of water baptism with a spiritual explanation of identifying by faith with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection as our own.

“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.” **Colossians 2:12**

Paul also states this in Romans.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **Romans 6:4-5**

Believer’s baptism testifies to one’s **identification** by faith with the Triune God; **the Father** in His sovereign plan, **Jesus the Son** in His completed work, and **Holy Spirit** in His effectual call.

Second, believer’s baptism is a **“first act” of obedience to Jesus’ command** in the Great Commission.

“...baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” **Matthew 28:19**

Becoming a disciple begins when we place our faith in Jesus to follow Him. Obedience is the heart of following Jesus by faith. [Christians humble themselves in baptism to obey Jesus and follow him in God’s mission.](#)

Third, believer’s baptism is a **“first act” of public testimony**.

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men,” **Matthew 10:32a**

We serve Christ when through baptism we publicly confess Him as Savior and Lord. Baptism is personal, but not only personal. Jesus was baptized by John publicly to validate his ministry and demonstrate to whom it was He prophesied about. Christianity is a public faith, a public identification with Christ, before people. [The Christian’s witness is made public through baptism because “Baptism is how Christians go public with their faith.”](#)⁴

Fourth, believer’s baptism is a **“first act” of fellowship in the church**.

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—” **1 Corinthians 12:13**

Paul teaches the Corinthians that water baptism signifies our entrance into the body of Christ. He explains this to the Colossians by confronting the continued demand for circumcision was necessary to be part of the community of faith. He

² See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1195f.

³ Christopher J. H. Wright. *Knowing Christ Through The Old Testament*, p107.

⁴ Bobby Jamieson. *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership*. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 3.



says that in Christ there is a circumcision of Christ through baptism. In other words, our inclusion into the community of the Lord's redeemed, the church, is by our identification (baptism) with Him by faith in his death, burial and resurrection. The spiritual reality of our life by faith in Jesus' work for us what religion says we must do in our flesh. "Baptism is "the solemn profession of redeemed sinner... (and) a sacred and serious act of incorporation into the visible community of faith"⁵ Believer's baptism represents a believer's entry into the community of the Lord's redeemed people, Life Together in the local church.

Baptism is important for Life Together because it is the outward testimony of one's inward change by identifying with Jesus and becoming a part of His body, the local church.

APPL "Have you put your faith in Jesus and been baptized?"

TRANS So we see how believer's baptism is a testimony to our identification with Jesus. Now let's look at the second means of identification and testimony in the Lord's Supper.

LORD'S SUPPER 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

*²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **1 Cor 11:23-26***

There were many issues in the church at Corinth. But one big issue is how flippantly they treated the Lord's Supper. Paul rebukes them and corrects their practice because of the purpose and meaning of the Lord's Supper for everyone. Paul aligns with the other gospels with his record of Jesus introducing the Supper to the disciples. Jesus instituted the observance to teach our identification with Him in His death. The meal is a symbol, but it is more than only a symbol.

We best understand Jesus' purpose for the Lord's Supper by the same **four words of baptism**.

1. The Lord's Supper is an act of **obedience** to remember Jesus' sacrifice for sin to give us peace with God.

2. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of our **identification** with Jesus, as we remember our participation through observance of His sacrifice.

3. The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of who centers our **fellowship** as the body of Christ, The Lord Jesus.

4. The Lord's Supper bears a faithful **testimony** to Jesus' work by his death on the cross for our salvation. The testimony we proclaim in believer's baptism we remember in observance of the Lord's Supper, that Jesus died for our sins that we might be made right with God.

The Lord's Supper is important for Life Together because it is our regular remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice for us, and how His sacrifice centers our fellowship.

Jesus gave baptism and the Lord's Supper as a testimony to remember and declare the gospel.

⁵Tom Schreiner & Shawn D. Wright. Believer's Baptism: Sign Of The New Covenant In Christ. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006), xvii.

