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## Foundations Leaders' Guide

### Lesson 4 – Instruction about Baptisms (Part I)

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#### Objectives

- Continue to get to know group members
- Understand the Biblical definition and importance of baptism in water
- Understand Jesus' command for every Christian to be baptized in water

#### Preparation

- Establish a meeting place and time
- Pray for the members of your group, that throughout the semester they would “be filled with a knowledge of God’s will so they may live a life worthy of the Lord” (*Colossians 1.9-12*)
- Print a notes sheet for each student
- If you are co-leading, determine who will lead which parts of the meeting

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Welcome Jesus

*Matthew 18.20:* “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.”

- ✓ Lead the group in prayer by welcoming Jesus as Lord, and asking Him to teach and transform each member of the group.

### 2. Welcome Each Other

- ✓ Lead the group in a personal discussion about how each member is doing, how God is working in the group and lives of each member, or any other topics. It can also be helpful for the group to share a funny story or personal story relevant to the day’s lesson.

### 3. Receive From the Lord

#### 3.1 Review

Spend time reviewing the content from lesson 1, including Standing in the Gap’s mission, the four chairs of discipleship, and the content from any previous lessons.

**Teacher’s Note:** *Group members should already be familiar with this content. To help them remember and memorize it, ask questions. For example, rather than stating “The purpose of Standing in the Gap is to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ,” ask “What is the purpose of Standing in the Gap?”*

#### 3.2 Instruction about Baptisms (Part I)

The third foundational teaching about Christ, instruction about baptisms, naturally follows repentance and faith. An important note is that in *Hebrews 11:2*, the word **baptisms** is plural, indicating more than one baptism. This week, we will study baptism in **water**.


- ? How have you experienced or witnessed baptism in water?

The word “baptize” comes directly from the Greek word “baptizo” (bap-tee-zoh), which means **to immerse, submerge, or dip** something in a liquid. This meaning is consistent through the New Testament and other historical sources. One notable source of the meaning of “baptizo” comes from a pickle recipe by Nicander, a Greek poet and physician who lived around 200 B.C. Nicander writes that, to become a pickle, a cucumber must be **baptized** in vinegar. In this recipe, we see that baptism involves both **total immersion** – the entire cucumber must be submerged – and **permanent transformation** – once the cucumber has become a pickle, there’s no turning back!

Baptism is discussed frequently in the New Testament. The original command to be baptized comes from the Great Commission. This is the primary reason baptism is so important for Christians – because Jesus commanded it! Therefore, baptism is first and foremost **an act of obedience** to Jesus:

 *Matthew 28.16-20*

As an example, Jesus himself was baptized at the beginning of his ministry:

 *Optional reading: Matthew 3:13-17*

Paul writes that baptism also has significant spiritual meaning, and that we should remember our baptism:

📖 *Romans 6.1-14*

- ? According to Paul, what is the significance of baptism?
- ? What do you think life should look like for someone who has experienced baptism?

Baptism perfectly symbolizes the death of the old self we discussed when studying **repentance** and birth of the new self we discussed when studying **faith**. In this sense, baptism is both an **end** and a **beginning**.

📖 *John 3.1-8*

In baptism, we become like Jesus in his death in order to become like him in his resurrection. It's important to note that this doesn't mean that sin automatically disappears – Paul clearly states that we must **not allow** sin to reign in our lives. Paul himself confesses his own sinfulness:

📖 *Romans 7.14-25*

- ? What do you think of Paul's struggle with sin? Can you relate?

Throughout the New Testament, the early Christians set an example for obedience to Christ's command by being baptized:

📖 *Acts 2.32-41*

📖 *Acts 8.26-40*

📖 *Acts 16.25-34*

📖 *Optional reading: Acts 9.1-19*

📖 *Optional reading: Acts 10.44-48*

From these passages, we can learn much about baptism:

- Baptism can be performed by **any disciple** of Jesus Christ (Ananias, who baptized Saul in Acts 9, isn't even mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament)
- The location does not seem to be of particular importance (In Acts 8, Philip and the eunuch were traveling on a road)
- Baptism always **immediately followed** an individual's profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord (this means that they had to first confess their faith, but after confessing they did not wait)

For further discussion:

- ? Some churches baptize infants, while others do not. Some even have a minimum age requirement (usually around 12 years old). Do you think either practice is more correct? Why or why not?

The Church of the Brethren, the denomination that supports Standing in the Gap, is rooted in **Anabaptism**, a movement which believes in baptizing only after an individual makes a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ. The Anabaptist movement began in the 1500s A.D., after infant baptism having been common in the Christian Church since at least 200 A.D. Though the issue is still debated among historians, there is no explicit evidence to confirm the presence of infant baptism in the early Church before 150 A.D.

Baptism is both an end and a beginning. It is an end of an old, sin-ruled life, and the beginning of the Spirit-filled, eternal life given us by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Just like Nicander's cucumber, Christian baptism involves both **total immersion** – by being baptized, we are declaring Jesus is Lord over our entire life – and **permanent transformation** – once we have been born again, there's no turning back.

- ? Have you obeyed Jesus' command to be baptized?
- ? If not, would you like to be baptized? Why or why not?
- ? If you have been baptized, how does your experience of baptism and rebirth compare with other Christians in the New Testament?

#### 4. Offer Response to the Lord

- ✓ Lead the group in prayer by thanking the Lord for his presence, and asking him to continue to teach and transform the group through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### FAQs

#### Is baptism necessary for salvation?

As we study in the lesson for *Faith in God*, genuine and **saving** faith always results in obedience to God. Because Jesus commanded that we be baptized (*Matthew 28.19*), obedience to Jesus in this command should naturally result from any truly saving faith. Disobedience is a sign that someone has not truly chosen to follow Jesus as Lord.

However, there are some instances where baptism may not be possible. For example, in *Luke 23.39-43*, the thief next to Jesus did not have the opportunity to be baptized, but Jesus still declared that the man would be in paradise.

This is an unusual scenario. Unless it is physically impossible for the person in question, baptism should be a priority for any believer who has not already been baptized.