

Water Baptism

(4Bs of Baptism)



What is the significance of baptism; the act of being submerged in water at the start of our journey of following Jesus?

Scripture

New followers of Jesus were baptised as part of Jesus' ministry on earth (see John 3:22 and John 4:1-3) and Jesus instructed his disciples to continue this practice after he returned to his Father (Matthew 28:18-20).

Read the Bible verses below about the meaning of baptism.

Romans 6:1-14 (Paul writes about the significance of baptism).

How does Paul describe baptism?

What aspects of baptism are familiar to you and what was new?

Story

An army chaplain was serving in the Iraq war. The war was mostly fought in a desert, so when one of his soldiers made the decision to follow Jesus, the chaplain had a dilemma as to how he was going to baptise him when there wasn't much water around, certainly not enough to submerge a stocky soldier in! Upon looking in the army supplies tent, he had an ingenious idea when he spotted the body-bags. Rather than dunking the soldier in some water to identify him with Jesus' death and resurrection, he got the soldier to lie down in the body-bag, zipped it up and then unzipped it.

Do you think the chaplain found a good substitute for water baptism?

How would you feel if your baptism was in a body-bag rather than submersion in water?

Shape

The **4 Bs of baptism** summarise its purpose and significance:

Believe – Baptism is about expressing your **belief** in Jesus Christ; that he is the Son of God, that he came and lived on the earth, that he died on the cross and was raised to life again by God. It is also about you expressing your decision to make Jesus Lord (King/Ruler) of your life; to give up any rights you felt you had to govern your own life and instead, committing to live in obedience to God.



Bury – Baptism is a **burial** of your old life. It is a putting away of your old nature that was controlled by sinful desires. When Jesus died he put our sinful nature to death (see Romans 6:6). By accepting Jesus' work on the cross you are allowing your old nature to be dead and buried with Christ – baptism symbolises this.

Become – Baptism is also a resurrection. It is about **becoming** a new person, now ruled by the Spirit of God. When Jesus was raised again he made it possible for us to have a new life with God and to be transformed inside and out, to live how God intends us to. Baptism is saying yes to this new nature from God.

Belong – Baptism is also about **belonging** to the family of God. When we are baptised we become part of the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:13). This means that God the Father becomes *our* Father, we become a child of God, and Jesus becomes our brother. We also enter into a worldwide family of believers in Christ, including those in our local church as our nearest and dearest brothers and sisters in Christ.

© David Cavanagh and Michael Lyden.

So What?

In groups, take some time to answer the following questions:

Since becoming a follower of Jesus, have you been baptised in water?

If you have already been baptised, how has this study reminded you of its significance? What do you want to give thanks to God for regarding your baptism?

If your parents got you baptised as a baby, how do you view this and what do you sense God saying to you about it? Now that you have grown up, how might you go about owning this for yourself?

If relevant, how might you go about arranging to be baptised?

Grow Further

Memory Verse:

Romans 6:3-4

'Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.'

Other Bible passages:

- Acts 2:38
- Acts 8:26-40
- Colossians 2:9-15
- 1 Peter 3:18-22

Other resources:

Water Baptism Explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVVPtoAE0kk>