
*ARE YOU
READY
TO BE
BAPTIZED?*

A TEEN'S GUIDE TO
MAKING THE MOST
IMPORTANT DECISION
OF YOUR LIFE



Are You Ready to Be Baptized?: A Teen's Guide to Making the Most Important Decision of Your Life (PDF Excerpt)

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
A Few Things to Note	5
Chapter 1 - Baptism and the Gospel	6
Chapter 2 - Common Questions about Baptism	15
Chapter 3 - Deciding If You Are Ready	23
Study Guide	27
Acknowledgments	29

[Note: Page numbers reflect the PDF version of this resource only, not the print version]

Introduction

I didn't want to do it. No matter what my parents said, I was adamant that I did not want to be baptized. Most people who know me today are surprised when I tell them this. After all, I was raised as a pastor's kid and loved Jesus from a young age. In hindsight, the reason I refused to do it was rather humorous: I couldn't swim, so I was terrified that I would drown when I was pushed under the water.

Did you just laugh when you read that? It's OK if you did because I did too! It's funny to me now that I didn't trust that I would survive being under the water for two seconds in my father's arms. Unfortunately, I allowed this fear to prevent me from doing what I knew the Lord was calling me to do. Because of this, I was not baptized until I was 13. This was different than my sisters and many of my friends, most of whom were baptized when they were between 7 and 10 years old. While I wish I hadn't resisted obeying the Lord, I'm now grateful I was older when I made what I now know was the most important decision of my life. Not only did I better understand what I was doing, but my struggle to surrender my life to Christ has helped me relate to others who have had a similar struggle, especially teenagers like you.

I am so grateful that you chose to pick up this book, because it means that you are considering making the most important decision of your life. Or maybe you have a friend considering the same decision that you want to help. Either way, if you are like most young people, you have a lot of questions about baptism, what the Bible says about it, and when is the right time to do it. So this book is designed to answer your questions so you or your friend can make the best decision. My hope is that you will either be excited to discover that you are ready to make this decision or that you will be challenged to prepare your heart so that you will be ready soon. Regardless of where you start or where you end up, I am so excited to take you on this journey.

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A Few Things to Note

Throughout this book, there will be several underlined verse references, usually in parentheses (Genesis 1:1). You should look these up on your own if you want to read more about the stories or truths that are shared. Translations are only marked on exact quotations. Any exact Scripture quotations will be **written in bold italics**.

There are also one or two questions at the end of the sections of Chapter 1 that are **written in gray**. All of these questions, as well as a few extra questions for Chapters 2 and 3, are included in the study guide at the end of the book. Consider writing down these questions and their answers in a journal or on paper if you want to reflect on them further.

Let's get started!

Chapter 1

Baptism and the Gospel

To fully understand why we need baptism, we need to take a look at the message of the gospel and how baptism came to be a part of it. This journey will take us through the basic message at the heart of the whole Bible and explain why Christians believe what they believe. Whether you have been raised in the church and know this by heart or you started attending church last week, it's good to review this story to make sure we understand the whole picture of why we believe what we believe. To start this journey, we need to go back to the book of Genesis.

Everything Started Out Great

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1 NIV)

Just like that, the incredible all-powerful God of the universe created the world in six days. After creating light, the sky, the ocean, the land, and every animal according to their kind, God saved His best creation for last. He created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the earth (Genesis 1:26 and 2:7). Then, He created the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 1:27 and 2:21-22). When this was done, God saw His creation was “very good” and truly complete (Genesis 1:31).

It's hard for us today to imagine the perfect world that Adam and Eve lived in. Aside from the beauty of the garden and the harmony they had with the creatures all around them, the best part was that they got to live in complete harmony with God. They walked beside him in the garden like you would walk with your best friend in a local park.

Question: Can you imagine what it would be like to be so close to God that you could walk right next to Him?

Until We Sinned

Unfortunately, things didn't stay perfect in paradise. When both Adam and Eve broke the one rule God gave them and ate the forbidden fruit, sin entered the world.

Before we continue, we've got to talk about this word called “sin.” Sin is doing something you know to be wrong (Romans 2:23), especially when you disobey God's greatest commandments of loving God or loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). Sin can also be avoiding something you know to be right (James 4:17). Either way, it means that you missed the mark of what God wants you to do, just like when an archer misses the bullseye on their target.

When sin entered the picture, everything changed. God is holy and perfect, but our sin makes us unholy and imperfect. God's holiness means that He cannot allow sinful people to be close to Him. So Adam and Eve could no longer walk with God because of their sin. They had to be banished from

the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 3:23](#)). And just like Adam and Eve, your sin puts a distance between you and God. Something has to be done about your sin for you to get back to Him.

Question: What is sin? What does it do to our relationship with God?

We Think We Can Make It, But We Always Fall Short

When most of us realize we are separated from God, we try to make it back to God on our own. Many people are convinced that if they do more good things than bad, or if most of their sins are “small sins”, they will be good enough to make it back to God by themselves. But the truth is that there is no such thing as a small sin. Every sin separates you from God just as much as breaking all of God’s laws at the same time ([James 2:10](#)).

If you try to jump this gap between you and God by yourself, you will always fall short. No one has ever been good enough to do that on their own ([Romans 3:23](#)). Anyone who doesn’t have their sin accounted for will have to stand before the Lord to answer for every wrong thing they have done ([Romans 14:12](#)). If we don’t find a way to remove our sin, we will be spiritually dead ([Colossians 2:13](#)) and the punishment will be going to Hell. In this punishment, one would be completely separated from God’s presence, lost in both fire and darkness ([2 Thessalonians 1:8-9](#), [Matthew 18:9](#), [Matthew 25:30](#)). Something has to be done about our sin to prevent this from happening.

Question: What happens when you try to jump the gap between you and God by yourself?

God Doesn’t Want Us to Be Separated from Him

Some people think that because Hell exists, God is angry, hateful, and unloving. But nothing could be further from the truth! The Lord is compassionate, gracious, and slow to anger ([Exodus 34:6](#)). However, He is also holy and cannot just ignore the problem of our sin. God didn’t want us to stay lost in our sin and knew that if He didn’t find a way to help us, we would be lost forever. So God started working on a plan, even before Adam and Eve first sinned, to help us find our way back to Him.

Question: What did God do when we became separated from Him by our sins?

God Sent His Son

Before we move forward in our story, we need to stop and explain the idea of the Trinity. There are three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is all three persons, yet He’s still just one God. This can be a little confusing and hard to understand, even for biblical scholars and experts. Father is the person that we normally think of as God, but we need to remember that God is all three persons, not just one. It’s important for us to try and understand this as we continue.

Knowing that there was no way that man could get back to God on their own, He decided to send the Son to earth as a human, but the Son would be no ordinary human. He would be born of a virgin (a woman who had never had sex with a man) so that the birth would be a miracle only God could do. As Jesus grew up, he became the only person to live who never sinned, even though He struggled with every temptation we face ([Hebrews 4:15](#)).

Question: Which person of the Trinity did God send to earth as a human? Why was He born of a virgin?

Jesus Was Baptized

When Jesus was about 30 years old, he prepared himself for what became known as his public ministry. He was about to spend 3 years traveling all over Galilee and Judea to teach God's new way. Jesus knew this would not be easy. He was fully God, but He was also fully human. His body would have physical limitations. To fulfill the will of the Father as a human, He needed help.

So Jesus went and sought out John the Baptist. John was His cousin and was also born under miraculous circumstances (His parents were old and thought they would never have children. See [Luke 1:5-25](#) and [Luke 2:57-66](#) for the full story). John was born to be Jesus' personal prophet and was meant to pave the way for Jesus and His teachings ([Matthew 3:3](#)). One of the things that John was doing was teaching his followers to repent of, or turn away from, their sinful ways ([Matthew 3:1-2](#)). The way that John encouraged them to demonstrate their repentance was by baptism ([Mark 1:4](#)).

Baptism is when someone is immersed (or dunked) underwater by someone holding you down and then pulling you back up. John knew that this was not the same as baptism into Jesus, but that it was merely meant to set the example for the baptism that was to come ([Mark 1:8](#)).

Question: What is baptism?

Just imagine how shocked John was when Jesus came and asked to be baptized by him! John felt unworthy, but Jesus assured him that this was what needed to be done to "fulfill all righteousness" ([Matthew 3:15](#)). When the baptism was complete, those who were present saw something remarkable:

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"
([Matthew 3:16-17](#) NIV)

While it might seem unnecessary for Jesus to do this if it was just for repentance, there were two greater reasons He needed to be baptized. The first reason Jesus needed to be baptized was to receive the Holy Spirit, which is what is referred to in this verse as the "Spirit of God". The Holy Spirit was the help Jesus needed while He was in His human form. To find the strength to face all He would face and to fight the physical temptations that were to come, Jesus needed the Holy Spirit in His corner. That's exactly what we need and Jesus made a way for us to get it, but we will get back to that in a minute.

The second reason that Jesus needed to be baptized was that it was an act of obedience. Obeying means doing what you are asked to do. Jesus' conversation with John implies that this baptism was a part of God's plan. In other words, the Father probably asked Jesus to do this, and Jesus always obeyed the Father. While some may argue that His baptism was unnecessary, His obedience to the Father's plan was completely necessary for the plan to be fulfilled.

Question: What two reasons did Jesus have for being baptized?

Jesus Died to Take Our Sins Away

A few months after Jesus' baptism, He began His public ministry by teaching the way of the Lord, discipling His followers, and loving the least of these by His example. However, most of what He taught angered the religious leaders of His day, because most of it didn't fit with their "rules over relationship" version of God's law. After a few years, Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples, who handed Him over to His enemies. Then His enemies wrongfully convicted Him and sentenced Him to be flogged and crucified.

But the death that Jesus endured was not just any execution. It was the most painful and humiliating death in the world at that time. The flogging would have stripped the skin off most of His body. With some additional beatings He endured, He was bleeding so much, that He would have been hardly recognizable as a human ([Isaiah 52:14](#)). Then being nailed to the cross would have required Him to pull His body up and down just to breathe, until He eventually died from suffocation. The blood that Jesus shed paid the price to free us from our sins and gave us a way back to God ([Revelation 1:5](#)). Through His sacrifice, we can be forgiven of all our sins.

If you have been going to church for a while, you have probably already heard that Jesus died on the cross. However, I think many of us have a hard time understanding this truth on a personal level. While it's true that He died for the sins of everyone who has ever chosen to follow Him, it's also true that *Jesus died for you*.

Have you ever taken time to think about the phrase "Jesus died for me"? And do you believe it to be true?

If you haven't taken the time to think about this, I encourage you to put this book down and go read either [Matthew 27](#), [Mark 15](#), [Luke 23](#), or [John 19](#). Read everything that happened to Jesus after Pilate sentenced Him to crucifixion. After you read, set your Bible down, close your eyes, and think about everything that Jesus went through to save you from your sins.

Finding your answer to these questions is one of the most important things you will ever do. Understanding and being thankful for what Jesus did for us on the cross is one of the most important parts of why a Christian becomes a Christian. If we believe it, then we should praise and thank the Lord for this gift every day for the rest of our lives.

Question: Do you believe the phrase "Jesus died for me"? Do you live your life like you believe this phrase is true?

He Rose from the Dead to Conquer Death

After His death, Jesus was buried in a tomb and it looked like that was the end of the story. The religious leaders who wanted Him dead posted guards at His tomb to make sure that no one would try to steal His body. His followers were so scared that they ran away and hid in fear. No one could imagine what was about to happen.

But after three days, Jesus rose from the dead. The large stone that sealed the cave He was buried in was rolled away. Jesus would appear to His disciples and other followers over the next 40

days, including one instance where He appeared to over 500 people at the same time ([1 Corinthians 15:6](#)). These appearances were enough to turn followers who were scared and hiding into courageous leaders that proclaimed what they saw and were willing to die for what they believed.

Question: Why do you think Jesus' disciples suddenly became so courageous?

Jesus' Death and Resurrection Are the Only Way Back to God

Jesus' death was what bought our forgiveness, but His resurrection is what gives us a chance at living a new life. Not only does this mean that we will have a new life when we commit our lives to Christ, but this also means that when our physical bodies die, we will get to spend the rest of eternity with God in Heaven ([John 11:25](#)).

Together, Jesus' death and resurrection made a way for us to get to God and took care of the problem of sin and death ([Romans 6:23](#)). Jesus becomes the bridge that spans the gap of our sin and gives us a way back to God. This means that Jesus is the only way for us to get into Heaven. You can't earn your way there by being good or sinning less than everyone else ([Ephesians 2:8](#); [John 14:6](#)).

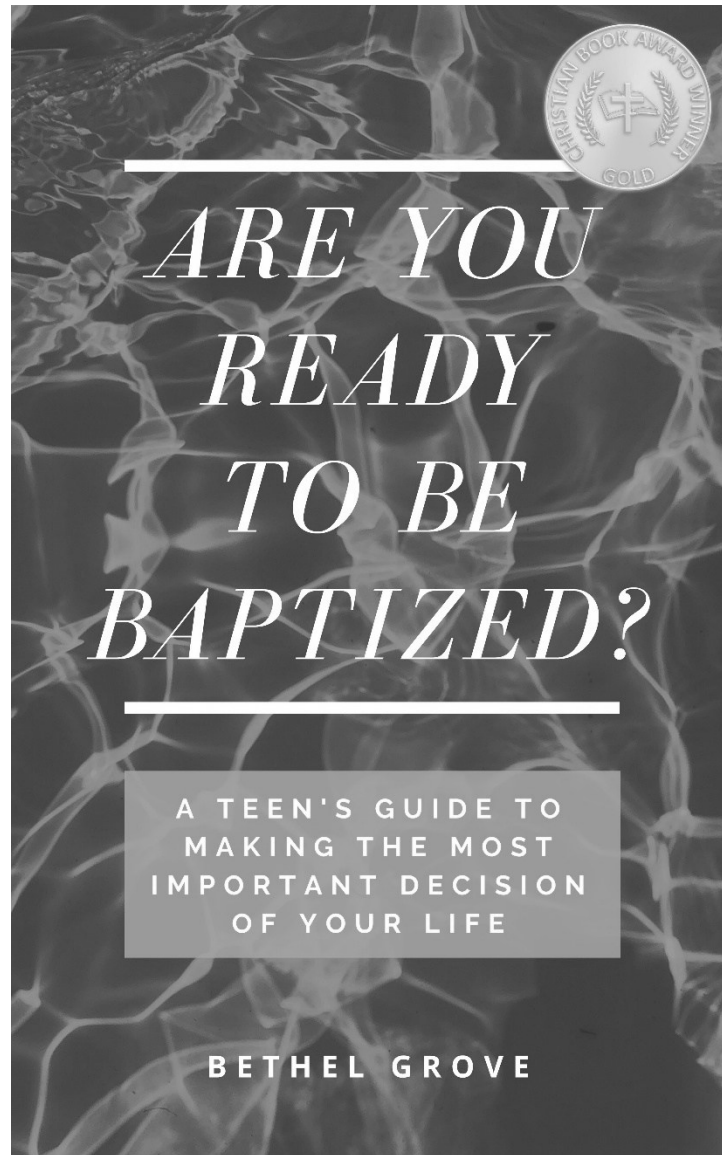
Let's use your phone as an example. Imagine that you got a new smartphone, but it does not have a working face scan or thumb scan feature. How do you get into your phone? The passcode. Once you set a passcode, if you don't remember the correct passcode, you can't get into your phone. There is no other way around it if you want to find a way back into your phone, end of story.

The same is true about Heaven. There is only one passcode that will get you into Heaven, and that is "Jesus."

Question: How do we get to Heaven?

To Be Continued

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