

## Lesson 44

### Question

What is baptism?

### Memory Verse

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. . . .Matt 28:19

### Answer

Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### Main Idea

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward reality-cleansing from sin.

### Lesson Outline

#### Open in prayer

**Introduction:** You will need a wedding ring.

Show the children the wedding ring and ask them what a wedding ring is a sign of. A wedding ring is a visible sign of promises made when someone is married.

Place the wedding ring on the ring finger of an unmarried person (make sure it will fit before the lesson). Ask the children if simply putting a ring on someone's finger makes him or her married. Of course it doesn't, because the ring is only a sign of what happens in the marriage ceremony. It's not the ring that makes someone married.

Introduce the children to question 44: "What is baptism?" Explain to the children that this lesson will help them to think about the sacrament of baptism. Highlight for the children that baptism is one of the ordinances that Jesus instituted in his church. Explain that just like the wedding ring, baptism is a sign of something promised. It doesn't actually save someone. But it is still an important outward sign of new birth and cleansing inside a person's heart.

**Activity:** Cut out the four illustrations from Q44 What Do These Signs Mean? (RB)

- An FBI badge indicates someone is an FBI agent.
- A purple heart medal indicates that someone was wounded or killed in battle.
- A baby on board button indicates someone is pregnant.
- A skull and bones label indicates that something is poisonous.

Pass around the pictures and ask the children if they can identify what they mean. The pictures are all signs that reveal something about the owner of the sign (badge, medal, etc.). Invite the children to describe what each sign communicates about the owner.

Point out to the children that the FBI badge doesn't make someone an FBI agent (otherwise everyone would be buying them on the internet!). The badge signifies that the person has trained very hard for many years to serve his or her country and he or she has the power of the United States government backing them.

Ask the children if receiving a military medal makes the owner a brave soldier. No, it is because they have been courageous that they have been awarded the medal. The baby on board button doesn't make someone pregnant. It is an outward sign revealing a very real inward physical reality. Likewise,

a poison label doesn't make something poisonous. It's simply put on the outside of a bottle or box to indicate what is inside.

Explain to the children that baptism is a sign. It says to the world that God is faithful to forgive the sins of those who put their trust in Jesus and live as God's children for his glory. Be very sure to communicate to the children that the physical act of baptism doesn't save anyone from anything.

**Lesson:** Read Matthew 28:16-20. Provide Bibles for the children to read along.

Contextualize this passage for the children by informing them that it comes right at the end of Matthew's Gospel. This event happened after Jesus had been crucified and before he ascended back into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. Explain to the children that this is the moment that Jesus ordains baptism as a sign for all believers. Up until this point in the Bible, various people had been baptized, but now at this point in salvation history, Jesus commands that all those who trust in him for the forgiveness of sins should be baptized.

Explain to the children that the word baptize means to immerse, dip, or submerge, or more generally, cleanse; the word is used of someone coming under water and paints a picture of cleansing and new birth. Ask the children if they can identify with that experience, either from swimming in the sea or a pool or from standing in a refreshing rain or cleansing shower. Explain to the children that the water signifies dying to their old self and rising to new life in Christ.

Baptism simply symbolizes that a Christian is someone who is united with Christ, someone who has been made new by the Holy Spirit and has turned away from his or her old ways.

Highlight for the children that baptism is a sign with a message. It shows that righteousness is by faith alone, but water baptism doesn't make someone a Christian. Remind the children that the only thing that can save a person from God's righteous anger and judgment is Jesus's substitutionary atonement on the cross, received by faith.

Ask the children if they noticed how Jesus said people should be baptized. It is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the three members of the Trinity. Explain to the children that being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is important because it shows the role and work of all of the members of the Trinity in the life of the believer.

Being baptized is a sign that shows the world that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. In salvation, a person's sins are forgiven, and he or she becomes a member of God's family.

Show the children from the passage that the call for all Christians is to go out to the ends of the earth, proclaiming the good news of Jesus and baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God calls his church to go out and make disciples; this is a command for every one of us!

**Recite:** Finish by helping the children commit Question 43 and the answer to memory.