

I Believe: What We Believe and Why it Matters

Marked by Christ: Baptism and Communion

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Romans 6:1-11 NLT

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

Jesus stepped into the story and fulfilled it for us.

Genesis 1:1–2 NLT

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Genesis 6:5–8 NLT

The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the

earth. It broke his heart. And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” But Noah found favor with the LORD.

1 Corinthians 10:1–2 NLT

I don’t want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses.

Joshua 3:14–17 NLT

So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. 15It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river’s edge, 16the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.

Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

Mark 1:9–11 NLT

One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

Baptism becomes our participation in the story of rescue.

Exodus 6:6 NLT

Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the LORD. I will free you from

your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment.

In the same way that the waters became a place of rescue and new beginning, the table becomes a place of covenant and communion.

Small Group Guide: Marked by Christ: Baptism and Communion

Opening Question

Think about something that has quietly shaped you — a habit, a routine, a rhythm you almost didn't notice. How did you realize it was forming you? What did it take to see it?

The Story the Water Has Always Been Telling

We are always being formed. Our habits form us, our attention forms us, our appetites form us — and if that is true, the question becomes: how does Jesus form us? That is where baptism and communion come in.

If we want to understand baptism, we have to start at the beginning.

Genesis 1 opens with darkness and deep waters, and the Spirit of God hovering over the surface. From those chaotic waters, God speaks order and life into existence. It is the first pattern: life emerging from water. But in Genesis 3, humanity unleashes chaos again through rebellion, and from that point forward, God begins doing something new — not just creating through water, but rescuing through it.

Noah and his family pass safely through the waters of judgment onto dry ground into a new beginning. Moses is delivered through the waters as an infant, and years later Israel crosses the Red Sea on dry ground while Egypt is swallowed behind them — Paul calls this a kind of baptism in 1 Corinthians 10. A generation later, Joshua leads Israel through the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the waters heaping up at a town called Adam. Each crossing moves God's people from death toward life, from slavery toward sonship, from the old toward the new.

Then Jesus steps into the Jordan — the very place Joshua crossed. John's baptism was one of repentance, and Jesus had nothing to repent of. He enters the water not because He needs to, but because He is stepping into the story. As He comes up out of the water, the Spirit descends like a dove

and the Father declares, “You are my dearly loved Son” (Mark 1:11). Every detail echoes the pattern. But unlike everyone who came before Him, Jesus will not just pass through water. He will pass through death itself. The Jordan points to the cross.

That is why, as Romans 6 makes plain, our baptism is participation in His death and resurrection. When a believer goes under the water, they declare: my old life has gone down with Christ. When they rise, they declare: I have been raised with Him into new creation. Baptism does not say, “You finally fixed yourself.” It says, “You belong now.”

The communion table follows the same logic. The Last Supper was a Passover meal with a recognizable order — four cups of wine, each tied to God’s promises in Exodus 6, moving the story from slavery to covenant belonging. The third cup — the Cup of Redemption — was the one Jesus took after supper. When He lifted it and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood,” every ear in the room recognized what He was doing. He was re-centering the entire meal. The bread of affliction that once pointed back to Egypt now pointed to His suffering. The lamb on the table became the Lamb at the table.

And so we come to the table not to earn our place, but because we already belong. Baptism is the doorway. Communion is the family meal. Both are designed to do something in us over time: shame loosens its grip, repentance becomes quicker, gratitude grows, and anxiety gives way to trust. We become what we already are — more and more shaped into the image of the Son.

For Discussion

1. We are always being shaped by something — habits, screens, routines, relationships. What are the forces forming you most right now, for better or worse? Are any of them ones you didn’t choose intentionally?

2. The water pattern runs from Genesis through Jesus: creation, flood, exodus, Jordan, cross. Which moment in that story connects most personally to where you are right now, and why?
3. Romans 6 says we have already died with Christ and been raised with Him. How does that identity — “you belong now” — change how you handle failure, temptation, or the way you talk to yourself when you fall short?
4. Jesus re-centered the entire Passover meal around Himself — the bread and cup now point to His body and blood. When you take communion, what do you tend to feel or think about? What would it look like to come to the table with a deeper awareness of what it cost and what it declares?

A Moment to Reflect

Over time, water and table shape us — we become what we already are, more like Him. Take a quiet moment with this question: In what area of your life do you most need to stop striving and start receiving — returning to who you already are in Christ? Share with the group anything that surfaces.