

Remember Your Baptism

MARK 1:1–11

GOAL

Participants remember baptism as both an event and an identity to be recalled and lived into throughout life.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR, for conversation starter videos.

PRAYER

Pour out your Spirit upon me, O God, as I remember my baptism and seek to practice a baptized life. Show me how I may offer welcome and hospitality, inclusion and wisdom in your name. Amen.

THIS SESSION

John the Baptist baptized people in preparation for the coming realm of God. Jesus was baptized by John with this same preparation, even as John witnessed to Jesus as the one whom God promised, the one for whom the people were preparing. As followers of Jesus, we continue to baptize and to be baptized in water and the Holy Spirit. As we remember our baptism, we remember Jesus' baptism and are united with him as God's beloved.

Jesus' baptismal living stands as a model for today's disciples to remember and live their baptism. In this session, adults explore baptismal practices: recalling the baptismal event, embracing God's promise as claimed and loved, honoring God, demonstrating God's love, living lives of discipleship, sharing the gifts of the Spirit, and bearing witness to God's kingdom in the world.

THE BIBLE STORY

Our foundational understanding about the event and the practice of baptism stems from Jesus' baptism as recorded in the Gospels. Each Gospel reports Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. In addition to Mark, see Matthew 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22; and John 1:28–34. Each Gospel account includes water, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and God's claiming of Jesus. These three elements carry forward into today's Sacrament of Baptism. Following Jesus' baptism, the Gospels tell of Jesus moving into his life's mission and ministry, suggesting that baptism was a turning point in Jesus' life. What follows in the Gospels is Jesus' practice of baptism, the life he lives following his baptism.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Make sure participants have a copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* prior to the session or distribute it at the meeting. This first session does not require participants to have read the *Adult Reflection Guide* before the session, but subsequent sessions assume most have read it.
- Prepare to read or paraphrase the "Summary of the Practice" from page 3.
- Have a bowl of water available for the opening and closing activities.

Depending on the options you choose:

- *Baptize* Infographic Poster (p. 5): Display the infographic poster before the session begins.
- Reaffirmation of Baptism (p. 7): Make copies of Resource Page 1 and gather a bowl of water and towels.

GETTING STARTED

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome participants and allow time for gathering activities particular to your group. Summarize the “Summary of the Practice.” Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay that begins on page 41 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read that essay during the course of the next four sessions.

PRAYER

Offer this prayer, which is said at some baptisms, or one of your choosing:

O God Most High,
you have made the font of baptism
to be the womb from which we are reborn
in the waters of life.
Grant that all who have been born of water and the Spirit
may live in Christ as the first fruits of the new humanity,
leading others to hope in the rebirth of your whole creation,
and to serve you with joy,
now and forever. Amen.¹

OPENING RITUAL

Place a bowl of water in the center of the group. Have people dip their fingers in the water and make a cross mark on their forehead or the back of their hand. Say to the group, “Through the waters of baptism, God claims you as God’s own beloved child.”

INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEOS

Show the “*Baptize Practice Overview*” video and the “*Baptize Session 1*” video from the Growing Faith Resources YouTube channel ([bit.ly /FMYouTubeGFR](https://bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR)). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the session.


REMEMBERING BAPTISM

Refer to the box on page 7 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* to engage participants in conversation about baptism. Some participants may remember their baptism; others may not. Some participants may not have been baptized. Have participants read the questions in the box and answer them as they apply to their lives. Discuss them.

BAPTIZE INFOGRAPHIC POSTER

Refer to the *Baptize* infographic poster to engage participants in conversation about baptism. Have participants look over the infographic and select a phrase about baptism that they affirm or wonder about. Invite volunteers to name their chosen phrase and discuss these as a group. You may supplement the conversation with what you know about baptism using additional information from the infographic and the foundational essay.

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- This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

 **Teaching Tip:** It is possible that someone in your group has not been baptized. God loves each of us, whether a person is baptized or not. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the church confirms what God has already done: God loves us and claims us. Throughout this practice, present a baptized life as inviting and not exclusive. Any follower of Jesus can live a life of discipleship.

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- Bowl of water

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- Internet-connected device

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- Pens

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- Baptize* infographic poster

1. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018), 440.

FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

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- Bibles
 - Pens

GOSPEL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' BAPTISM

Assign one Gospel account of Jesus' baptism to four persons, pairs, or small groups: Mark 1:1–11; Matthew 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:28–34. Tell readers to imagine themselves present at the baptism scene described in their assigned text. Using the questions in the *Adult Reflection Guide*, page 8, “Finding the Practice in the Bible,” discuss and record their responses in their *Adult Reflection Guides*.

Gather participants and have them describe Jesus' baptism scene(s) as described in the Gospel account they read. Identify the common elements and the details unique to each account.

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- Bibles
 - Pens

BAPTISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Refer to page 9 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*, “Baptism in the Book of Acts.” Have participants choose one of the passages listed, read their passage, and prepare to describe the baptism event found in that text.

Gather the group and have participants report on their chosen baptism events. Invite any participants who completed this activity at home to add their insights. When each passage has been presented, ask:

- ➔ What is significant about the biblical memories of these baptism events?
- ➔ What occurs in the baptism events that indicates the coming realm of God?
- ➔ What do you know about the person who was baptized that reflects living as a child of God?
- ➔ What do we learn about practicing baptism from these baptism events?

FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

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- Internet-connected device

BAPTISM: A SIGN OF PROMISE

Show the YouTube video “Gifts of God: The Sacraments—Baptism: A Sign of Promise” (bit.ly/FMBaptismSacrament, 7:35). Encourage participants to notice images and messages that resonate with them about baptism. Following the video, share impressions noted by participants.

Discuss:

- ➔ What images or messages about baptism came up in the video?
- ➔ How does practicing baptism affect the lives of an individual? A family? A community?
- ➔ What is transformative about baptism? How does baptism transform us?
- ➔ How is baptism a sign of promise?

MARTIN LUTHER

Refer to page 10 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*, “Finding the Practice Then and Now.” Read the first two paragraphs and discuss the value of remembering one’s baptism and one’s identity as a baptized child of God.

Ask:

- ➔ What effect did recalling the affirmation “I am baptized” have for Martin Luther?
- ➔ What effect can claiming this memory have on one’s day-to-day living?

Invite participants to write their responses to the questions on page 10 in their *Adult Reflection Guides*. End this activity by discussing their responses to the second question:

- ➔ What could serve as a reminder that you belong to God?

PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

Refer to “Clothed with Christ” on page 11 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Have participants read the four Scripture texts that use clothing as a metaphor for new life as a follower of Jesus: Galatians 3:26–29; Ephesians 4:17–32; Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:9–17. Discuss:

- ➔ What do these texts say about living as a follower of Jesus?
- ➔ In living this way, how is one practicing baptism?
- ➔ What guidance do you find for living your baptism/following Jesus?

REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1 and explain that a reaffirmation of baptism service invites participants to claim God’s love for them whether or not they’ve been baptized. It is not meant to replace or repeat a person’s baptism. Lead participants in remembering their baptism or the baptism of a family member or other loved one. Have volunteers read and lead different parts of the liturgy.

REMEMBERING IN WORSHIP

Invite participants to remember a baptism service celebrated in your congregation. Discuss:

- ➔ How did you feel as you witnessed this event?
- ➔ What did you remember about your baptism as you witnessed this event?

Refer to “Remembering During Worship” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Talk about different ways baptism can be remembered through the various actions in worship listed on the page. Ask:

- ➔ What actions, words, or furnishings could be referenced in worship to remind people of their baptism?
- ➔ How might these references be helpful to you and members of your worshipping community?

Make a plan to communicate these insights as worship suggestions to your pastor, worship leader, or worship team.

Pens

Bibles

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- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Bowl of water
 - Towels



The *Glory to God* hymnal includes a liturgy for Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant on pages 20–22.

FOLLOWING JESUS

BREATH PRAYER

Refer to page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Engage participants in a breath prayer to remember their baptism. Select one of the suggested phrases on the page. Tell participants to sit comfortably, relax, and prepare to pray. Tell them to breathe in slowly while praying the first phrase. Breathe out slowly while praying the second phrase. Continue praying as they breathe, and conclude their praying at your signal.

Encourage participants to use the breath prayer daily in the week ahead as they remember their baptism and practice following Jesus.

Bowl of water

CLOSING RITUAL

Use the bowl of water from the opening ritual. Before departing, have people dip their fingers in the water and make a cross mark on their forehead or back of their hand. Each may say: “Remember and practice baptism.”

Commit as a group to read the next session before the meeting.

Reaffirmation of Baptism

Sentences of Scripture

Hear these words from the apostle Paul:

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:27–29)

Profession of Faith

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer even as John witnessed to Jesus as the one whom God promised, the one for whom the people were preparing. As followers of Jesus, we continue to baptize and to be baptized in water and the Holy Spirit. As we remember our baptism, we recall Jesus’ baptism and are united with him as God’s beloved. We join hearts and voices in professing faith in Jesus Christ, the faith in which God’s people are baptized.

Trusting in God’s mercy, do you turn from sin and reject evil and the power of these in the world?

I do.

Do you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

I do.

Do you seek to be clothed with Christ, to follow him as a disciple, and to practice your baptism in your daily living?

I do.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

We give you thanks, O God, for the gift of baptism.

With the mark of water, we join with Jesus and one another in a cleansing and anointing, claiming and receiving your love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace.

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, he was cleansed by the common element of water. He was anointed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You, O God, claim Jesus as your Son, the Beloved. You poured upon him your Holy Spirit, empowering him to love and serve you in his life and in his death.

In this same water, some of us gathered here were also baptized. Each of us is loved, claimed, and empowered by you.

For these gifts, we are grateful.

Show your Spirit upon us, O God, as we remember baptism.

As we are touched by water this day, may we know your presence and your inspiration.

May we know your love and your mercy.

May we know your cleansing and your grace.

Empower us to live as faithful and active followers of Christ,

in whose name we gather, pray, and serve.

On this day, we remember baptism—our own and that of our loved ones.

We give you thanks for the blessing and promise you shower upon us

and upon your people.

Marked, cleansed, anointed, and claimed, we receive your Spirit and are yours, O God.

We praise you.

We give you thanks.

We give you glory, now and forever.

We are yours, O God.

Amen.

Aspersion

As the leader moves around the room with the bowl of water, lightly sprinkling/splashing the water on participants, say:

Remember your baptism and be thankful, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Peace

May the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

