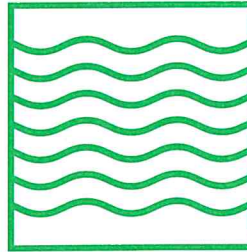


Question 44

What is baptism?



Answer

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

Big Idea

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

Aim

To help the children understand what the sacrament¹ of baptism is.

Bible Passage

Matthew 28:16–20

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)

Virtue

Forgiveness



1. If your church does not use the word *sacrament*, feel free to substitute the word *ordinance*.



Notes

Leader's Notes

Baptism is a sign and seal that someone is part of God's family. It is an outward sign of ownership; it is like a royal seal declaring that a person belongs to God. The children will be familiar with the concept of baptism. Whether they have been baptized or not, they will have witnessed the baptism of a family or church family member. This question will help the children dig deeper into the meaning and significance of baptism. This lesson aims to help the children understand how the sign of baptism is applied to the child of God in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- The discussions around this question may take on a denominational

form; be prepared to answer the children's questions and be patient with any confusion.

- Continue to work hard to help the children understand abstract concepts in a concrete way.
- It would be helpful if the children could witness a baptismal service as they engage with these questions.
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

Leader's Prayer

Heavenly Father, I praise you that you have cleansed me from my sin through the precious blood of Jesus. Thank you that you have instituted the sacrament of baptism in your church and ordained an outward visible washing with baptismal water that

portrays my salvation to the world. Grant understanding to the children who will hear this lesson. May they further understand the meaning of baptism and continue to gain great confidence in the gospel. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Leader's Tool Kit

- Paneled inflatable beach ball and a marker
- A wedding ring
- Q44 What Do These Signs Mean? (RB), one copy
- Q44 Photos (RB), one copy
- A large sheet of paper and some markers



10 Catechism Recap

On a paneled inflatable beach ball write a selection of catechism questions from questions twenty-five through forty, one per panel.

Gather the children into a circle and explain that the idea of the game is to keep the beach ball off the floor. Each child must participate to keep the beach ball in the air. If the beach

ball drops to the ground, someone must volunteer to answer one of the catechism questions written on the ball, or the whole group gets a penalty. The penalty could be things like twenty jumping jacks or five push-ups, or something silly like walking across the room like a crab.

5 Introduction to Question 44

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.

Notes

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



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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.



Teaching Outline

Begin the teaching time by asking for God's help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

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!

Conclude the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 44 and the answer to memory.

(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)

Notes



Activity



You will need Q44 Photos (RB).

Tell the children that you are going to tell them a true story. Show the picture of Nate Saint's family.

Nate Saint was an American missionary, who along with Jim Elliot, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, and Pete Fleming went to share the good news of Jesus with the Waodani people in Ecuador. The Waodani

had never heard about Jesus, and this team of men went to fulfill Jesus's command to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Waodani people had little contact with outsiders. The five missionaries could not speak much of the Waodani language, but they tried to get to know them through friendly gestures. They thought they had been successful, but to everyone's shock, all



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five men were speared to death by members of the Waodani people on the banks of the Curaray River.

But the story didn't end there! Nate Saint's sister Rachel and Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of missionary Jim Elliot, went back to live and work among the Waodani people. In time, many of the Waodani became Christians. It was a beautiful testimony to the power of forgiveness and the power of the gospel.

Several years later, Nate Saint's two children, Kathy and Steve, were baptized in the same river where their father had been killed. They were baptized by two of the men who had killed him. Kimo and Dyuwi had become Christians; they had repented of their sin and had found forgiveness in Jesus's name. Steve and Kathy knew that they, too, were sinners, and needed forgiveness. By asking their father's killers to baptize them, they testified that there is no sin that cannot be cleansed by Jesus's blood.



Discussion and Question Time

Some questions that might arise include:

? If someone is a Christian but isn't baptized, would he or she go to heaven after death?

Yes! Explain to the children that baptism does not save, but is a sign of salvation. Every Christian should seek to be baptized, but if something prevents the outward sign, it doesn't take away the inner reality.

? Why do people need to be baptized then?

Explain to the children that the most important reason is because

Jesus commanded that his disciples should be baptized.

Also use this opportunity to help the children think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- Ask the children if they understand that baptism is a sign and therefore doesn't by itself save anyone.
- Ask the children if they would be willing to go and make disciples.
- Ask the children how they might explain baptism to a non-Christian.

**10** Virtue Vision**Notes**

Forgiveness

Invite the children to reflect on Nate Saint's story, and ask if they think they might be able to forgive in the way that the families of the murdered men did.

Ask them what parts of the story show that the families of the murdered men had forgiven the Waodani people. Rachel Saint and Elisabeth Elliot went back to live with the Waodani to share the gospel with them, and Steve and Kathy Saint chose to be baptized by them.

Ask why Steve and Kathy, even though they had been raised by missionaries, needed to be baptized. (We are all sinners and in need of God's forgiveness.)

Ask if anyone can remember the part of the Lord's Prayer that speaks of forgiveness. Do they think Steve's and Kathy's baptisms are a good illustration of "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"?

10 Memory Activity

Write out the memory verse or catechism question and answer on a large piece of paper without any spaces between the words.

Read the verse or catechism question and answer out loud to the children, and then

invite the children to draw lines where they think there should be spaces. Ask the children to read the memory verse or catechism question and answer together a few times, and then ask if anyone would like to say it individually.

5 Closing Prayer Time

Pray with gratitude for the sacrament of baptism and the beautiful sign that it is of God's forgiveness and rescue, bringing people from life to death.

