



A JOURNEY OF FAITH
SESSION TWO

2 What Does Baptism Mean?

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“What Does Baptism Mean?”
Session Two of Ten Sessions from the book:
*A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry:
Bible Answers to Life’s Toughest Questions*

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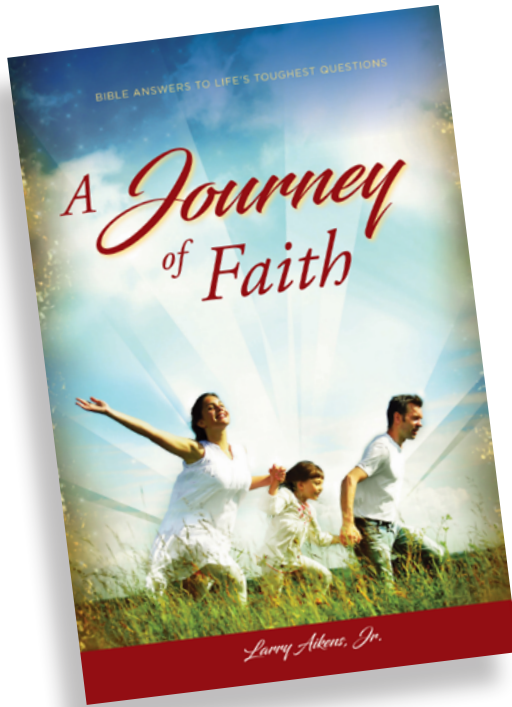
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SESSION **TWO** FROM

A Journey of Faith

BIBLE ANSWERS TO
LIFE'S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS



Only Jesus 4 Me, Inc.
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Virginia USA

A SPECIAL INVITATION

As a pastor since 1992, I have realized that many people have questions on their mind about God and the Bible. Sometimes they tell me that they aren't sure they should ask, but they wonder, "Why *do* bad things happen in this world—especially to good people? Doesn't God love us, can't God protect us? Why doesn't God answer *my* prayers?"

So many people have said to me, "Pastor, I have been trying to read the Bible, but I just don't understand it. And besides, where did all these different versions of the Bible come from. Which one should I use? It's just so confusing!"

And the questions keep on coming: "How can I know for sure that I will be in Heaven when I die? Has my life really mattered? Is there any help in the Bible for my personal finances? How can I make better decisions? Do you believe in speaking in tongues? Can a person recover from addictions?" And on they go...

All of these are good and fair questions—completely necessary—and they have caused me to really pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as I have studied God's Word to try to find answers for what I consider to be *the toughest questions about life*. This book is the product of that research and experience—trying to get at answers that will help you understand God better.

I am quick to admit that I can't answer all of the toughest questions completely—some of life's mysteries God just hasn't fully explained—but I have tried to provide sessions in *A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry* to at least engage with these questions fairly.

These sessions provide a framework to process these mysteries through a biblical understanding of what God has explained to us and really wants us to know. You might be surprised at just how much can be uncovered if you are willing to do a little bit of discovery in a guided setting. So many people with the toughest questions have told me that this study has helped them immensely.

I want to thank these folks who have *journeyed* with us up to this point. Each sincere person has deepened my faith, and has in some way been an encourager to produce the resource that you hold in your hand. I feel indebted to all who have spoken into my *Journey of Faith*, and especially to the Holy

Spirit who has guided each of us, and has revealed the truth of God's Word to our hearts as we have diligently pursued a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It is my sincere hope that you will also travel with us and take the time to study these provided materials carefully. This *Journey* very well could be a wise investment in your relationship with Almighty God. My prayer is that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you may emerge from this series of studies a more informed and dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your fellow Journeyer,

Larry

Psalm 40:1-3

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY!

We are delighted that you have joined us for *A Journey of Faith*. We know that this is a wise investment you are making in your life, and it is our sincere desire that you will understand more of God's love for you and how you fit into God's plan of grace. We would like to introduce you to a few practical ideas:

- ✓ When you watch or attend the sessions, be sure to have a Bible, this resource, and a way to take notes. We will be studying the Bible, using the *New Living Translation*. While it is not required, it might be helpful for you to purchase this translation. We suggest the *NLT Illustrated Study Bible*.
- ✓ Before each session, please read carefully the material you have received. We believe that *Truth Discovered Is Truth Retained!* Please come to the sessions prepared.
- ✓ We offer this *Journey* with appreciation to those whose questions, together with our own, have challenged us to dig deep into God's Word for answers. It is because of their curiosity that this discipleship ministry has been developed. As you study, we realize that you also may have questions of your own. Please feel free to ask your questions during our discussion time, or contact your facilitator throughout the week. We are always happy to talk with you about your *Journey*.
- ✓ After the session, please complete the Discussion Questions and Abiding Principles on our website. Submit these for extra credit!
- ✓ If you are enjoying *A Journey of Faith*, please refer a friend to Journey with us. Visit www.onlyJesus4me.com to discover how to become a Licensed Facilitator and offer this life-changing resource to others. It is easy and rewarding!
- ✓ Before our study each week, we will say this prayer together:
“Dear heavenly Father, I ask that you open my heart to receive the Scripture for today's lesson. I also ask for the Holy Spirit to give me courage to take the steps of a true disciple in following Jesus, as truth is revealed to me through this *Journey of Faith*. Thank you for your grace at work in my life to draw me closer to your awesome love. I pray in Jesus' holy name, Amen.”

THEME VERSES

2 Peter 1:3a, 5a

³By his *Divine Power*,
God has given us
Everything we need
for living a *Godly Life*.

⁵In view of all this, make
every effort to *Respond*
to God's *Promises*.
Supplement [or add to]
Your Faith.



ABIDING PRINCIPLES

ROMANS 6:4

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.

PSALM 107:2

Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.

JAMES 1:25

But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION TWO

There is probably no subject in Christianity that evokes more questions than a discussion on baptism. Many differences between denominations stem from varying understandings of what the Bible teaches about the meaning of baptism and how baptism should be administered.

What does the Bible say about infant baptism? Should I be baptized again after I accept Christ as my Savior? Should I be immersed, sprinkled, or poured? If immersed, should it be done three times forward or one time backward? If it was done “wrong” the first time, should I be re-baptized? Is baptism in a church baptistry just as good as baptism down at the river? Do I need to wear a robe, or will shorts and a t-shirt suffice? Are there baptism classes that I have to take before I get baptized? Can I transfer my baptism from one church to another?

The questions go on and on... To answer some of these questions, we have to look to the traditions of the church that we attend. The Bible just doesn't exactly teach us some of these things, so our founders did the best they could to follow the Scriptures according to their best understanding. Consequently, many churches have different traditions surrounding baptism, and it is important to honor those traditions—*unless* they contradict clear Bible teaching.

In this session, I will lay out what I believe the Bible teaches about this subject of baptism. As I present my understandings of this subject, I will try to note when what I share comes from my traditions, rather than what I believe is clearly taught in Scripture. Even so, there will certainly be scholars who disagree with my conclusions of what the Scriptures teach.

However, I trust that by getting into the Scriptures, you will be able to decide what *you* believe Christ is calling you to do about *your* own baptism. Whatever you decide, I trust your decision will be based upon the Word of God. To help you get started, let me define two important terms:

A Public Profession of Faith starts the Christian life with a definite and public statement that a person has become a true Christian and desires to enter a life of discipleship as a follower of Jesus Christ. Simply put, a believer making

this profession of faith is stating that he or she is not ashamed of identification with Christ and God's people, and thereby intends to be accountable to such.

Baptism incorporates or builds upon this public profession of faith by symbolizing a believer's position with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. This symbolism declares a believer's intention to die to the flesh, bury the old nature, and begin to operate in the new nature with the help of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, a believer is formally initiated into the Church and set apart publicly to a life of carrying forth the ministry of Jesus Christ through their local church.

Against the backdrop of these two definitions, we will study the Scriptures to see the meaning of these important first steps in the Christian life. We will learn that this outward profession of faith and baptism represent a deep inner meaning for the follower of Jesus. As we understand better this inner meaning in the ceremony of baptism, we will find that baptism serves as a practical lesson that will help each of us on a daily basis to be able to follow Christ as a true disciple.

TEXT: ROMANS 5:20-6:8

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.

²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin's Power Is Broken

¹ Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?

² Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

⁴ 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.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.

⁶ 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.

⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.



SESSION 2: WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN?

The Bible teaches that a believer should make a public profession of his or her faith and follow the Lord in baptism after experiencing the new birth in Christ.

I. **Baptism should *follow* salvation: baptism is for those who have been born again (vss. 1-2).**

A. A person is not a candidate for baptism until he or she has become a member of the family of God through salvation.

Acts 8:36-37 – ³⁶As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look! There’s some water! Why can’t I be baptized?”

³⁷“You can,” Philip answered, “If you believe with all your heart.” And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

1. Baptism is an outward profession of an inward faith.
 - a. For baptism to have true meaning, first there must be an active faith in a person’s heart that has brought him or her to newness of life in Christ.
 - b. Baptism is an expression of a genuine faith that desires to follow Christ in baptism and also in humble discipleship.
2. There is a difference between infant baptism and baptism as a

born-again believer (believer's baptism).

- B. Soon after a person becomes a member of the family of God through salvation, he or she should make a definite, public profession of faith.

Note Jesus' words:

“Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

1. The transforming power of the gospel gives courage for believers to openly identify with Christ by making a public profession of their faith.

Romans 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

2. A public profession of faith helps provide accountability in a new believer's life.

1 Timothy 6:12 – Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

3. This public profession of faith may be coupled with baptism, or may simply be a first step toward a commitment to prepare for baptism.

4. Either way, baptism is an open confession of genuine faith and thus initiates a new believer into a life of accountability and true discipleship.

II. Our motivations for baptism (6:3-4).¹

- A. We are following our Savior's pattern (vs. 3).

Matthew 3:13 – Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

- B. We are following a scriptural precedent.²

Acts 2:41 – Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and

added to the church that day...

Acts 8:12-13 – ¹²But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. ¹³Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

C. We are surrendered to Jesus’ program.

1. Baptism is part of Christ’s Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20a – ¹⁸Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.”

2. The local church is responsible for continuing Jesus’ program and thus fulfilling this commission.
3. In baptism, we become full participants in the church and thus share the responsibility of Jesus’ program.³

D. There is a great symbolism to be published (vs. 4).⁴

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the Church that symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
2. Our baptism identifies us with Christ by...
 - a. Symbolizing our desire to die to our old life—the corrupted, sinful nature.
 - b. Symbolizing our desire to bury our old life that we lived outside of Christ.
 - c. Symbolizing our desire to follow our new nature and live for Christ as a true disciple.
3. There are also other ordinances of the Church that are important to renewing our baptismal commitments. In our tradition we practice what is called The Love Feast. This ceremony continues

the symbolism of a believer's identity with Christ in the following two ways:

- a. The Lord's Supper, often called Communion or the Eucharist.
1 Corinthians 11:26 – For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.
- b. Foot washing, which we believe was commanded by Christ.
John 13:12-15 – ¹²After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

*Baptism Identifies us
as followers of Christ.*

- E. There is a separation to make public (vs. 4).
 1. Baptism sets us apart from the world and openly identifies each of us as a follower of Christ.
Colossians 2:12 – For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.
 2. As followers of Christ, we have two daily responsibilities:
 - a. Cooperating with God's inner work of transformation by...

- 1) Dying to our old life of sin (vs. 4).

Galatians 2:20 – My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- 2) Surrendering to God by allowing Christ to live his life through us (vs. 4).

Romans 12:1-2 – ¹And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

- b. Living publicly in a way that bears both silent and spoken witness to God's marvelous grace by doing "those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life" (Romans 6:22).⁵

III. The biblical method of baptism (vs. 4).

- A. The word baptism is from the Greek word *baptizo* (bap-tid'-zo), and means "to immerse, submerge; to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet). It is used only (in the N. T.) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism."⁶
- B. The baptismal ceremonies in Scripture seem to indicate that baptism should be by immersion.⁷

Matthew 3:16 – After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.

Acts 8:38-39 – ³⁸He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.

- C. The wording used in the baptismal ceremony contains quotations from Scripture. The pastor might say: I baptize you “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). “Buried with Christ by baptism” and “raised” to “live a new life” (Romans 6:4).
- D. Since baptism marks the start of a new life in Christ, often the pastor will have a prayer of dedication for the new disciple, inviting the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon his or her life for effective ministry.⁸

IV. Some different viewpoints of baptism.

- A. Some churches practice infant baptism because of a different understanding of Scripture.
 - 1. The baptism of infants does not seem to “fit” the biblical model that we have studied.
 - 2. Infants may be dedicated to the Lord, but we believe it is not necessary for salvation (I Sam. 1:26-28).
 - a. We understand baptism to be only for believers in Christ.
 - b. Infants are “safe” in the Lord until they reach the age of accountability (2 Sam. 12:22-23).
 - c. Salvation is an adult-like choice that each of us must make for ourselves.
 - d. Baptism is much more meaningful when the person being baptized is old enough to make his or her own decision.
- B. Some churches sprinkle or pour, rather than immerse, for baptism.
 - 1. Our motivations for baptism are more important than the method. However, these other methods do not seem to follow the pattern we see in Scripture, nor do they present the symbolism in quite the way we have studied.
 - 2. As I understand the Scriptures, a person who has previously been sprinkled or poured should now be immersed.

John 13:17 – Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

 - a. In our tradition, we immerse three times forward; once each

in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We immerse from a kneeling position as a sign of our submission and humility before God. Our fore-parents felt this method of triune (or trine) immersion was closest to the methods of the early church.

- b. Others immerse one time backward in the likeness of the death and burial of Christ.
- c. From a scriptural standpoint, I believe that either method of immersion is acceptable. I practice according to the traditions of the church that I serve.

*Washed in the Blood of Jesus
Renewed by the Holy Spirit.*

- C. Some religions teach that baptism washes away sins.
 1. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that washes away sin.
Hebrews 9:14a – Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God.
 2. Remember the thief on the cross?
Luke 23:42-43 – ⁴²Then he [the thief on the cross] said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” ⁴³And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”
 3. Salvation is accomplished by Christ’s work being applied by the Holy Spirit to the individual.
Titus 3:5-6 – ⁵[God our Savior] saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He

washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.

4. Even so, true salvation will lead a person to a public profession of faith and baptism.

Acts 2:38 – Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

V. Some reasons that people refuse to make a public profession of faith or be baptized.

- A. Some lack courage to stand for Christ.

Proverbs 29:25 – Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the LORD means safety.

- B. Some lack conviction needed to sever relationships with others.

Matthew 6:24 – “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

1. Baptism may sever a relationship with a church or religion that is not teaching the truth of God’s Word.
2. Baptism may sever relationships with “friends” who are not following God.
3. Baptism will cause us to realign our priorities, putting God first in all decisions.
4. Even so, when you take a small step toward God, you will find that God has already taken a giant step toward you.

- C. Some lack true conversion—perhaps they have never experienced the new birth in Christ.

James 2:17-18 – ¹⁷So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. ¹⁸Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will

show you my faith by my good deeds.”

IN CONCLUSION

I remember visiting with an elderly lady years ago. In our conversation, I asked about her relationship with Christ. She responded rather bluntly, “Son, I will have you to know that my relationship with God is a *very* private matter—I never discuss it.”

“How sad,” I thought. I tried to explain to her that while it is true that her relationship with God was a *very personal* matter, it was not to be a *private* matter. God calls upon us to live a public testimony in both word and deed.

A public profession of faith and baptism are just the beginning of this public witness. As daily we consider ourselves to be dead to our sinful lives and we bury the old life with Christ, we are able to be raised up to live in a new way—to walk with Christ as a true disciple, showing forth the praises of God and sharing with others God’s marvelous grace.

ILLUSTRATION

The story of the well-known evangelist Billy Sunday (1862 - 1935) always inspires me. He was reared in an orphanage, but by the age of twenty-one, he was playing professional baseball for the Chicago White Sox. Three years later he gave his heart and life to Christ at the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission in Chicago. In his own words, he describes what took place:

I arose and said to the boys [teammates], ‘I’m through. I am going to Jesus Christ. We’ve come to the parting of the ways,’ and I turned my back on them. . . . I turned and left that little group on the corner of State and Madison Streets and walked to the little mission and fell on my knees and staggered out of sin and into the arms of the Savior.⁹

Five years after making this public profession of faith, Billy gave up baseball and responded to the calling of God to enter the ministry. Throughout his preaching ministry, hundreds of thousands responded to his public invitations to receive Christ, “hitting the saw-dust trail”¹⁰ to clasp his hand, signifying their acceptance of Christ.

Billy Sunday lived the kind of life Christ calls us to lead—a life of openly

declaring our faith by how we live and also by how we witness of Christ's love. What starts in the baptismal ceremony should continue in our day-to-day lives as we take responsibility for Christ's church and its mission to accomplish the work of Jesus.



An Invitation... Have you followed the Lord in believer's baptism? What I am asking is have you been scripturally baptized *after* you came to faith and experienced the new birth in Christ? If not, I want to encourage you to humbly seek baptism.

Often the question comes up: "Should I be re-baptized now that I am truly a disciple of Christ? I think the first time I was baptized, I really didn't know what I was doing." This describes my experience. I was baptized very young, but came to realize later that I hadn't really understood the commitment that I was making. Later, I was truly baptized.

So, I will answer that question this way. In my mind, you would not be *re-baptized*—the first time it was a religious ceremony, with meaning on God's side, but certainly not so much on yours. This time, you will truly be baptized for the right reasons and in the right way. You will be declaring your genuine faith and desire to humbly follow Jesus Christ as both your Savior and Lord. This time, when you are buried with Christ in baptism, you will be making a declaration that you truly want to set aside your old life and begin anew with Christ.

Christ is always faithful, but we struggle and make many mistakes. I feel that in the wideness of God's grace, God will understand that you want to experience baptism in its fullness. Being baptized again doesn't suggest that God's grace was not sufficient, or that somehow God has failed. Rather, in my mind, it proves the sincerity of a true disciple who wants another chance to meet God's grace as expressed in Christ's mercy—this time both accepting God's love *and*, importantly, making an informed decision to surrender to Jesus as Lord and Master of your life.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Brethren believe that baptism is a response to God’s saving act through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” *All Who Minister* (Elgin: Brethren Press, 1993), 130.

² “Brethren believe that baptism is an act of obedience to the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.” *Ibid.*

³ “Brethren believe that baptism is an initiation rite into the church, the body of Christ. To believe in Jesus Christ means to believe in his church and to be part of it. Baptism is the moment of entering the church, of assuming responsible membership.” *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴ “Brethren believe that baptism is a symbol of cleansing and new life. It is an outward sign of an inner experience. There is a new creation, a new birth. Baptism is a public witness of the covenant relationship with God.” *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵ “Brethren believe that baptism is a beginning. It is understood not as something completed but as the start of the Christian’s pilgrimage of faith.” *Ibid.*, 131.

⁶ James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary* (Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc., 2006): NT:907.

⁷ Brethren practice a “trine immersion,” immersing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *All Who Minister*, 130.

⁸ “Brethren believe that baptism is an ordination into ministry. All people, as they join the church through baptism, are called to minister through their life and work to their neighbors in the world.” *Ibid.*, 131.

⁹ William T. Ellis, LL.D., *Billy Sunday: The Man and His Message* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1914), 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you read and studied this entire session? Yes No

Please answer the Discussion Questions below in complete sentences, using our website. When you submit your answers to OJM, you will get a copy of Larry's and Diane's answers in return via email! (You may wish to keep a copy of your answers to compare yours with theirs as you continue discovering truth.) If you are not sure how to answer each question, go ahead and "take a stab at it." Once you start writing, you may surprise yourself! There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We want to hear your thoughts!

1. Do you believe a person must be baptized in order to go to heaven, or is it just something necessary for the Christian life in this world? Why or why not?
2. What do you believe the Bible teaches about the proper method of baptism? Please explain.
3. Discuss what baptism teaches us about the Christian life on a day-to-day basis.
4. Does a person need to be baptized with witnesses present, or can a person be baptized in secret? Please explain your answer.
5. If a person was baptized as a young person, would he or she need to be baptized again as an adult? Please give an example of a particular situation to support your answer.

IN ADDITION...

Remember to write out the Abiding Principles on the website. If you complete these simple assignments, you will earn an upgraded certificate!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the glory and praise goes to God for all of the many blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I truly am grateful to God for the wonderful people God has put in my life since I was but a small child. I chose the theme verses for Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) from [Psalm 71:17-18](#), for truly as the Psalmist said: “[God has] taught me from my earliest childhood.” I am indebted to many voices and guides who have spoken into my faith *Journey* to bring me to this new opportunity to teach others *A Journey of Faith*.

My *Journey of Faith* started many years ago, when in God’s grace and providence, God allowed me to be born into a Christian home. When I was but three years of age, God led my parents, Larry and Linda, into full-time missions work. My early life was enriched by their experiences of faith and service to Christ. I owe them my lasting gratitude for the many ways they gave me a wonderful start in life.

Further, I am very grateful for the church families that have allowed me to serve Jesus in their midst since 1992. So much of what I have learned has been in the pursuit of their needs. Also, searching questions that have come to the surface in both my life and theirs, have called forth a diligent study on my part. I love each and every person with whom I have had the opportunity to minister throughout the years, and I appreciate all that they have taught me. Space would not allow me to thank each person by name, but to those who were part of these church families, know that I am eternally grateful that our journeys have intersected. I feel that we have blessed each other forward in our mutual faith, and I am thankful for what you have brought into my life.

I am grateful for a host of professors, pastors, teachers, and counselors who have spoken into my faith journey. I studied officially in many classrooms, but unofficially, I have sat at the feet of so many wonderful Christians—some whom I have pastored and others whom I have led as part of my church staff. Those very ones whom I was called to lead have led me in many ways. I can’t thank these mentors enough. I only wish that space would allow me to mention each one by name.

I also want to offer my appreciation to my first wife, Holly, and my children, Nathaniel and Jessica, for allowing me the time to pursue ministry, writing,

education, and the lofty dreams that I felt God placed within my heart. While I felt my motives were pure and my intentions were the best, I haven't always known how to balance my time and priorities well. I am sure that in my early zeal for God, I often got caught up in lofty goals that were more than what God had called me to pursue. In those times, my family suffered a great deal for my lack of attentiveness to them, and I regret that. I also made my share of mistakes and needed forgiveness. For those sacrifices they made to invest in who I have become, I offer my sincere thanks and humble gratitude. If I could go back, I would do things very differently. My children are grown now, and I love them very much.

God in his mercy and grace has allowed me to remarry a wonderful partner, Diane. I am very grateful for her support and the expertise that she has brought into my life. She is a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, a grammarian, and an excellent musician. Her humble ways of living out her faith in Jesus Christ are constant lessons to me. She has a gentle spirit and has modeled to me the Christ-life, to which I aspire. I can't say "thank you" enough to her. She has a courage about her that is remarkable, and even though God has entrusted to her a battle with Stage IV cancer, she fights on with great courage. My thanks for her careful review of all of our written materials and the excellent edits. She might just make a grammarian out of me yet. I doubt it, but it is worth her continued try! Also, a special thank you is in order for Diane's parents, Don and Doris Johns. They are special folks, and they sure reared a fine daughter!

I must give a special thanks to my church family at Bethel. They are simply the BEST. I would never be able to express to them how much I love them and the church that we all call "home." It is such a privilege to be their pastor and to help carry on the work of Jesus. I appreciate Bethel's support and belief in the project of OJM. Their partnership is such a blessing to us. I want to give my appreciation to the chairperson of our Church Board, Robert Phillips, and his wife Lena, and also the chairperson of our Deacons, Ron Wampler, and his wife Carolyn. All of the leaders at Bethel are dear friends and encouragers in the work of Christ—I wish I had the space to list all of their names. I also want to thank our District Executive Minister, Bro. John Jantzi, for his review of some of our lessons and his excellent input and ideas. Also, my thanks go to him for believing in me and being the conduit that God used to bring Bethel and us together. He is a blessing and such an encouragement as we endeavor

to serve Christ together. I also want to give a shout out to the Discipleship Ministries Team with whom I have the privilege of serving: David Chappell, Jan Orndorff, and Debby Rimel are wonderful friends and encouragers. My “thank you” to the team! They have made me a better disciple of Jesus, and I appreciate their steady encouragement to look to Jesus and keep the attention on HIM!

Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) was born out of a calling that I felt through fervent prayer on my knees. I shared the vision first with Diane, and she was right there to support me. We both prayed for God’s direction in putting the right people into our path to help launch this ministry. In the early days, God led us to a local businessman, C.L. Russell of C.L. Russell Photography in Broadway, Virginia. He is the creative genius behind the videography and photography! He and his wife, LaShonda, have become good friends, and we are very grateful for the ways they have supported OJM. In those early days, God also led us to Josh Hallahan of Christian Internet Design in Missoula, Montana. He and his team have brilliantly developed the website and have constantly been a source of encouragement in the Lord. They have found the tools to make the vision a reality! We are very grateful to them.

As we began to delve into the work of creating OJM, we realized very quickly that we needed some expertise in graphics design, technical issues, and developing the ministry materials, such as the book that you are reading. After much prayer, the Lord reminded me of a good friend who had assisted us on many previous projects, Tillman Ross of Graphic Imaging in Concord, North Carolina. We asked Tillman to consult with us as our Impressions Manager, and he graciously accepted. He is gifted at bringing colors, web pages, pictures and concepts into a unified whole. His creations speak of excellence, and we feel they are a wonderful reflection on OJM’s passion for Jesus. A “thank you” to Tillman for his steady and creative guidance, as well as being a friend in the Gospel ministry since 2003.

On the business side, we have been working with our CPA and friend, Ed Neese, from Greensboro, North Carolina. I pastored there in the late 1990’s and asked Ed to do my personal taxes. Since that time, Ed has done my yearly return and has counseled me on many financial matters. He loves the Lord Jesus, and he has been a true business friend. I am deeply grateful for his

guidance in financial matters concerning OJM, and ministry in general, but even more so for his consistent friendship and encouragement to both me and Diane. God has also brought into our lives a good friend and attorney, Dan Neher from Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is a solid brother in Christ and has been a source of encouragement and assistance in advising us on legal matters concerning OJM. We are grateful to Dan for his expertise.

Musically, God has put in our path a new friend from Nashville, Tennessee, Peter Young. Peter is an accomplished drummer, arranger, and producer. He has given “wings” to the theme song God allowed me to compose, “Only Jesus 4 Me,” and brought together incredible talent in Nashville to produce the song at the legendary Studio 19. He has been awesome to work with. Our thanks to Peter, and a thank you to the recording studio and all of the musicians who played on the project: Kyle Hershman, Studio Engineer; Chris Nole, Keyboards; Ron de la Vega, Bass; Peter Young, drums; Tony Paoletta, pedal steel; Joe Spivey, Acoustic Guitar, Fiddle and Mandolin, and Chas Williams, Lead Guitar. Mike Lusk is the awesome singing talent on the theme song, and he sounded just great. We appreciate Mike and all the musicians for their contributions!

There are so many others God has used in my life—many friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues who have prayed for me—and I am truly grateful for each and every one. If I have failed to mention you by name, please understand that it was not on purpose. Yet above and beyond all others, I am humbled by the friendship of Jesus. I am so grateful that Jesus would entrust to me his vision for *Only Jesus 4 Me* and *A Journey of Faith*. I realized long ago that inspiration and creativity do not come from a human being; rather, all that is good comes from the Holy Spirit working through a yielded person to accomplish the purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When I am at my best, I feel the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I give all the glory to Jesus. “In him, I live and move and have my being” (Acts 17:28). I know all the glory goes to God and I am eternally grateful for any small part that I have in Jesus’ kingdom. If this ministry touches your heart and is a help to you, please join with us in giving God the glory. God alone is worthy! Praise be to Jesus! Thank you, Jesus. Only Jesus 4 Me! Amen!



PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Photo 1: “Photography of Waterfalls between Trees,” May 16, 2017, by Rifqi Ramadhan from Yogyakarta, Indonesia on Pexels.

Photo 2: “Shallow Focus Photography of Water Splash,” Bhubaneswar, India, June 30, 2018, by Sourav Mishra on Pexels.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Larry was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and reared on the missionary field. He is the second of six children. His folks served the Spanish-speaking world until Larry was a teenager, and then they traveled as a family in full-time evangelistic work in the United States. He recalls being in forty-three states and three other countries before going to college. During these formative years, Larry gave his heart and life to Christ and felt a calling to serve the Lord in local church work.

Larry was ordained to the full-time Gospel ministry in 1992, serving as a music and youth minister until 1995. Since that time, he has had the privilege of lifting up Christ as a pastor in the Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Church of the Brethren (COB). He is currently serving as the pastor of Bethel-Mayland COB in Broadway, Virginia, and the interim pastor of Pine Grove COB in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He also serves with the Shenandoah District COB as a member of the Discipleship Ministry Team.

Larry has earned three seminary degrees: a Master of Theology (Th.M.) and a Doctorate of Theology (Th.D.) from Covington Theological Seminary, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Larry is the father to two grown children, Nathaniel and Jessica, and a grandfather to Kirsten. Larry and his wife Diane reside in New Market, Virginia. When not busy in the ministry, Larry enjoys music, the outdoors, golf, tennis, riding motorcycles, and reading—especially biographies. Diane shares many of the same interests and is also a wonderful pianist. They both enjoy ministering, spending time together, traveling, and meeting other believers.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Diane was born near Tacoma, Washington, and grew up as the baby sister of two brothers. At seven years of age, her family moved across the country back to her mother's home in the mountains of Pennsylvania. They took up residence in an old farmhouse on the edge of the family farm and got very involved in their local church and Christian school. Diane's dad served as an assistant to the pastor, and her mother taught high school maths and sciences in the Christian school.

After graduation from high school, Diane went to Pensacola Christian College (PCC) and earned her bachelor's degree in Music Ministry in 1999, traveling with the PCC Ensemble for two years and helping to promote the college. She was offered an opportunity to continue her studies as a Graduate Assistant and earned a seminary degree in Church Music (M.C.M.) through Pensacola Theological Seminary in 2001.

Diane has had a diverse opportunity to experience Christ and how various traditions practice their faith. She grew up in a Community church, belonged to a non-denominational church, served on staff at a Baptist church, attended a Full Gospel church, and has belonged to the United Methodist Church. She is now a member of the Church of the Brethren, where she serves with her husband, Larry. Diane has also served the local church as a choir member and director, pianist, Sunday school teacher, secretary, and financial secretary. She is very involved in supporting Larry's ministry as a pastor's wife.

She offers her input in the discussion questions throughout this book as a person who has experienced the *Journey* many times. She hopes that her input will help to broaden the discussions and further the conversations around these important topics.



A JOURNEY OF FAITH INCLUDES

- Session 1 | God's Wonderful Assurance of Salvation
- Session 2 | What Does Baptism Mean?
- Session 3 | The Meeting House of God
- Session 4 | Is the Bible Relevant for Today?
- Session 5 | A Guide to Prayer and Fasting
- Session 6 | God's Will: Revealed & Concealed
- Session 7 | Financial Wisdom
- Session 8 | The Worldwide Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Session 9 | Anointed by the Holy Spirit
- Session 10 | Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's Children?



Don't Miss A Session!