

THE FREEDOM STUDIES | Part Two | Receiving Grace | STUDY 07

Raised to New Life

Faith, baptism, forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and union with Christ.

A Grace-Centered, Spirit-Led Journey with Jesus

KEY SCRIPTURES | NIV

Ephesians 2:8-10 | Acts 2:36-41 | Acts 8:26-39 | Acts 10:34-48 | Romans 6:1-11 | Galatians 3:26-29

About 60-75 minutes | Individual or group study

AN INVITATION

Before We Begin

Baptism is sometimes minimized as an optional symbol and sometimes treated as though the water itself earns salvation. Scripture presents something more beautiful: baptism is a faith-filled response to the gospel, joined to forgiveness, the gift of the Spirit, union with Christ, and entry into new life.

We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. Baptism does not replace grace or the cross; it expresses trusting surrender to what Jesus has accomplished. It is neither a reward for reaching spiritual maturity nor a human work by which we purchase forgiveness.

Opening Prayer

God, help me approach baptism without fear, defensiveness, or inherited assumptions. Let the whole witness of Scripture speak. Show me the grace of Jesus, the meaning of faith, and the beauty of responding to Your promise in baptism. Amen.

THE FOUNDATION

Saved by Grace Through Faith

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV)

Salvation is God's gift by grace through faith, not from ourselves or our works. Those saved are God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works.

Any biblical understanding of baptism must remain grounded here. Jesus saves. His blood reconciles us, His resurrection gives life, and His grace is received by faith. No ritual can place God in our debt.

Yet grace does not make response meaningless. Faith receives and entrusts itself to God. The New Testament normally shows faith responding openly through repentance, confession of Jesus, and baptism.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What is the source of salvation in this passage?
2. Why can no human response become a reason to boast?
3. How can faith be active without becoming a work that earns grace?
4. What fears or assumptions do you bring into a study of baptism?

Repent and Be Baptized

Read Acts 2:36-41 (NIV)

After hearing that Jesus is Lord and Messiah, the crowd is cut to the heart. Peter calls them to repent and be baptized in Jesus' name for forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who receive the message are baptized.

Peter connects baptism closely with the promise of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. The response is immediate because it rests on Jesus' identity and God's promise, not on a lengthy demonstration of readiness.

Repentance and baptism belong together as a heart turns toward God and entrusts itself to Jesus. The passage does not describe water acting independently of faith; it describes people receiving the gospel and responding in Jesus' name.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What truth cuts the hearers to the heart?
2. What response does Peter give, and what promises accompany it?
3. How quickly do those who receive the message respond?
4. What is different between preparing someone to understand baptism and requiring them to prove future maturity?

GOD MEETS PEOPLE PERSONALLY

Faith Responds Without a Formula

Read Acts 8:26-39 and Acts 10:34-48 (NIV)

An Ethiopian official hears the good news about Jesus and asks to be baptized when he sees water. In Cornelius's household, the Spirit falls while Peter is speaking, and Peter then commands that the new believers be baptized.

Both accounts honor baptism while reminding us that God is not imprisoned by our sequence. The Ethiopian responds as soon as he understands the good news. Cornelius receives the Spirit before water baptism, demonstrating God's freedom and acceptance of Gentile believers.

Patterns help us understand Scripture, but they must not become systems that overrule Scripture. God's action remains primary, and baptism remains the ordinary, joyful response of people who believe the gospel.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What moves the Ethiopian to ask for baptism?
2. What surprises Peter and the Jewish believers in Cornelius's home?

3. What do these accounts affirm about baptism-and about God's freedom?
4. How can we teach a biblical pattern without turning it into a rigid formula?

JOINED WITH CHRIST

Buried and Raised with Jesus

Read Romans 6:1-11 (NIV)

Paul describes those baptized into Christ as baptized into His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in new life. Their old self is crucified so they may live to God.

Baptism is not merely an administrative marker of church membership. It tells the gospel personally: Jesus died, was buried, and rose-and by faith we are joined with Him in that story.

New life begins; it is not instantly completed. Paul calls baptized believers to count themselves alive to God because their identity in Christ is now the foundation for ongoing transformation.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. What connections does Paul make between baptism and Jesus' death and resurrection?
2. What begins at baptism according to this passage?
3. How does identity in Christ support transformation after baptism?
4. What old identity or bondage do you long to leave in the grave?

CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

Children of God Through Faith

Read Galatians 3:26-29 (NIV)

Paul tells believers that in Christ Jesus they are children of God through faith, and those baptized into Christ have clothed themselves with Christ. Human distinctions no longer determine worth or belonging.

Faith and baptism are not opponents in Paul's language. Baptism is woven into the faith by which people receive their new identity in Christ. The focus remains on whom they have put on: Christ.

This identity also dismantles spiritual hierarchy based on ethnicity, social position, or gender. Baptism joins believers to Christ and therefore to one another as equal recipients of promise.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

1. How are faith, baptism, and identity connected here?
2. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ?
3. Which human distinctions had been used to determine spiritual worth?
4. How should shared baptism affect power and belonging in Christian community?

NO PRESSURE - ONLY HONESTY

Your Response

Baptism is personal, but it is not meant to be pressured. If you are considering baptism, continue asking honest questions until you can respond to Jesus with faith and a clear conscience-not confidence that you have achieved perfection.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What does baptism mean in the passages you read?
2. Where does Scripture place the power to save?
3. Does your previous experience of baptism reflect a personal response of faith to the gospel?
4. Is God inviting you to be baptized, to remember your baptism with renewed faith, or to continue studying before deciding?

A PRAYER YOU MAY MAKE YOUR OWN

Closing Prayer

Jesus, thank You for dying and rising to give me life. Help me trust Your grace rather than a ritual or my own performance. Give me clarity and courage to respond to You in faith. Whether I am preparing for baptism or learning to live from it, teach me to count myself alive to God and clothed with Christ. Amen.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

A Note for Anyone Walking Alongside Another Person

Do not use fear of condemnation, deadlines, group pressure, or additional institutional requirements to force baptism. Explain the passages honestly, answer questions, and distinguish biblical readiness-faith in Jesus and a heart turned toward God-from completed maturity. Do not delay a sincere believer for extra-biblical milestones.

Continue when you are ready: Your New Identity in Christ

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