

St. Paul 2017 Faith Focus: The Small Catechism
Week 4: Holy Baptism
Host guide

Warm Up

If there are new people, you can introduce yourself; then have each person in the group share:

- What is a baptism you remember? Yours? A family member? A particularly comical or poignant one?

Teaching: Audio

These audio segments will be available online and in a CD format.

Segment 1 of audio content (3 minutes): Baptism in Scripture

- Jesus Baptism is central event in Gospels
- Acts records all sorts of people baptized
- New Testament is filled with reflection on meaning of Baptism

Some discussion questions:

- Did you ever wonder what Jesus was like between his birth and his Baptism? Why does the Bible include so few stories, do you think?
- Does it surprise you that there are more references in Scripture to Jesus Baptism than his birth?
- If someone asked you, could you recall the story of Jesus' Baptism?
- Scripture has people baptized in a variety of places and times. What do you think is necessary for a Baptism?
- Do you ever acknowledge that you are connected to just about every single other Christian, including Jesus, in spite of numerous differences, by your baptism?

Segment 2 of audio content (3 minutes): Luther's insights into Baptism

- Luther sets it up in a Law and Gospel format
- For Luther, the question is not whether baptism saves or faith saves. They go together and should not, really cannot be split.
- Luther talks about baptism's impact on daily life

Some discussion questions:

- Why do you think people should be baptized? If you were a parent, why did you think it was important for your child to be baptized?
- What kind of rules should we have as a church for people that want to be baptized? Have their children baptized? Should they be members? Have a family member that is a member? Attend X number of worship services?
- If someone was baptized but then lived a terrible life, do you think they should be re-baptized?
(Pastor Rob: No! We all stray and need to be restored!)

Application: Baptism for Daily Living

What does such baptizing with water signify?

It signifies that the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand, that a daily a new person is come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Some discussion questions:

- Luther extols the value of guilt here. While guilt can become a very bad thing, what is the constructive role of guilt in our life?
- What are the necessary things a person needs in life to repent? How can a person actually change their behavior?
- Do you find Luther's take – that we are always a mix of a perfectly bad person and a perfectly good person – liberating or discouraging?
- Do you find Luther's take – that our whole life is one of struggle against sin, albeit aided by God's grace – discouraging or encouraging?
- What does new life feel like? How does it feel when God has refreshed you for the journey?

Prayer:

Luther emphasizes praying through the parts of the catechism. It is probably easiest to pray through Commandments or petitions of the Lord's Prayer. I would invite you though to pray a prayer though pondering your own baptism.

+ Meditate -- Ask God what does your Baptism mean for you this day?

+ Thank -- Thank God for the way in which God has placed his name on you: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and has claimed you as your child.

+ Confess – Confess to God the parts of your life that need to be drowned and repented from.

+ Pray for binding – Ask God that you would be an instrument of God's will in this world.

Some groups are having success playing music while people pray or even pray in color. I have some possible audio clips on the website (YouTube videos).