

THE BUILD & DEFEND SERIES

ESTABLISHING THE CORNERSTONE OF JESUS NAME WATER BAPTISM

A SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Introduction

Welcome to “Establishing the Cornerstone of Jesus Name Water Baptism,” a transformative Bible study series designed specifically for youth. This series takes a deep dive into the Oneness Apostolic tradition of Jesus name water baptism, examining its biblical roots, theological significance, and enduring impact on both individual lives and the community of believers.

Over the course of five engaging lessons, we'll explore the rich tapestry of history, symbolism, and faith that makes this practice a cornerstone of our spiritual identity.

Lesson 1: The Apostolic Connection

We start by tracing the lineage of our faith back to the early church. By examining Acts 2:38 and the precedent set by the apostles, we'll understand how baptism in Jesus' name acts as a spiritual anchor, keeping us steadfast in the apostolic tradition.

Lesson 2: Theological Distinctiveness

Our second lesson delves into the unique theology behind Jesus name baptism. Through scriptures like Colossians 2:9, we'll unpack the profound implications of seeing the fullness of God's nature in Christ and how this shapes our baptismal practice.

Lesson 3: Symbolic Significance

Baptism is rich with symbolism. In this session, we will immerse ourselves in the meaning behind the sacred act, drawing from Romans 6:4 to see how it signifies our death to sin and resurrection into a new life in Christ.

Lesson 4: Personal and Communal Declaration

Here we examine baptism as a declaration of faith—both personally and within the community. As Galatians 3:27 teaches us, being baptized into Christ is a public act of putting on a new, Christ-centered identity.

Lesson 5: Historical Importance and Modern Application

In our final lesson, we bridge past and present, considering how the historical practice of Jesus name baptism remains vital and relevant today. Jude 1:3 calls us to uphold the traditions of our faith as we forge our path in the modern world.

As we journey through these lessons, you'll be invited to engage with the material through interactive discussions, personal reflections, and creative expressions of faith. This series is more than a study; it's an invitation to deepen your spiritual roots and live out your baptism in Jesus' name with renewed understanding and commitment. Let's embark on this journey together, ready to be challenged, inspired, and transformed.

Lesson 1: The Apostolic Connection

1. Hook/Ice Breaker: “Chain of Events” Activity

Begin by asking the youth to form a circle. Give them a ball of yarn. The first person holds the end of the yarn and shares something they learned about the early church or apostles. They then toss the ball of yarn to someone else while holding onto the end of the string. This continues until everyone is holding a part of the yarn, creating a web. Explain that just like the yarn, the apostles were connected through their shared experiences and teachings, and we are connected to those same teachings through our practices today.

2. Central Verse: “Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’” Acts 2:38

3. Body of the Lesson

Exploring the Apostolic Roots

- 1. The Early Church’s Example:** Discuss the context in which Acts 2:38 was given—during the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Emphasize that Peter was addressing a diverse crowd, explaining the process of salvation: repentance, baptism in Jesus’ name, and receiving the Holy Spirit.
 - The role of Peter as a foundational apostle in the early church.
 - The significance of following apostolic precedent in doctrine and practice.
- 2. The Significance of the Name:** Explore why the name of Jesus was specifically used in the baptismal formula by the apostles and why it is still important today. Discuss the authority and power in the name of Jesus.
 - The authority given to the apostles to bind and loose (Matthew 16:19).
 - The name of Jesus in healing and miracles as recorded in Acts.
- 3. Unity with Apostolic Doctrine:** Highlight the importance of unity with the apostolic teachings as a means of staying true to the original message of the church.
 - The oneness and unity of the church as depicted in Ephesians 4:5.
 - The dangers of deviating from apostolic doctrine.

4. Additional Scriptures

- Matthew 16:19 – Discuss the authority given to the apostles.
- Ephesians 4:5 – Talk about the oneness of faith and baptism.
- Acts 4:12 – Emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus’ name in salvation.

5. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the apostles baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and not in the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
2. How can we apply the apostles’ teachings in our current faith practices?
3. What does having a direct connection to the apostolic era mean to you personally?

6. Closer

Action Item: Encourage participants to research and share a brief history of an apostle or a story from the Acts of the Apostles, highlighting the importance of continuity in Christian practices.

Focus for the Closing Prayer: Pray for the participants to have a deeper understanding of the apostolic foundation of their faith and to feel a connection to the early church. Ask for guidance in walking according to the apostolic teachings and for the strength to uphold these truths in their daily lives.

Lesson 2: Theological Distinctiveness

1. Hook/Ice Breaker: “Unique Pieces” Discussion

Invite the youth to bring an item that is unique to them or describes them. Each person will explain why the item represents them. This will lead into a discussion about how just as each item is unique to the individual, so is our understanding of God’s nature unique within the Christian faith.

2. Central Verse: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” Colossians 2:9

3. Body of the Lesson

Understanding Oneness Theology

1. **The Fullness of God in Christ:** Begin by discussing the central verse, Colossians 2:9, to understand the belief that the totality of God’s nature is embodied in Jesus Christ.
 - Contrast the Oneness perspective with Trinitarian views of God’s nature, namely that the Trinitarian view emphasizes three separate and distinct persons in one while the Oneness perspective claims a single deity manifested in different ways for different purposes.
 - Discuss the implications of viewing Jesus not as a part of the Trinity but as the full manifestation of God.
2. **Baptism in His Name:** Relate the concept of God’s fullness in Christ to the practice of baptism, exploring why invoking the name of Jesus is theologically significant in Oneness Pentecostalism.
 - The power and authority found in the name of Jesus.
 - How baptism in Jesus’ name serves as an affirmation of His deity.
3. **A Distinctive Faith Expression:** Discuss how this theological distinctiveness affects other areas of faith and practice, emphasizing the importance of having a clear understanding of one’s beliefs.
 - The impact of theology on worship, community life, and personal identity.
 - The role of doctrinal distinctiveness in the history of the church.

4. Additional Scriptures

- Deuteronomy 6:4 – Discuss the foundational Jewish belief in God’s oneness which carries into Oneness Pentecostal theology.
- 1 Timothy 3:16 – Contemplate the mystery of godliness and the revelation of God in Christ.
- Acts 4:12 – Further examination of the necessity of Jesus’ name in salvation.

5. Discussion Questions

1. How does the understanding that “the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form” in Christ affect your personal relationship with God?
2. In what ways does our distinctive view of God challenge or support your current beliefs?
3. How can we respectfully explain our theological distinctiveness to those who may have different beliefs?

6. Closer

Action Item: Challenge the youth to write a personal statement of faith that incorporates their understanding of God’s nature according to Oneness theology and how it impacts their life.

Focus for the Closing Prayer: Pray for clarity of understanding and for the courage to stand firm in our distinct beliefs. Ask for wisdom to articulate these beliefs with love and respect to others. Seek God’s guidance to live out these theological truths in a way that honors Him.

Lesson 3: Symbolic Significance

1. Hook/Ice Breaker: “Symbolic Gestures” Interactive Demonstration

Start with an interactive demonstration. Have three volunteers each perform a simple action (like planting a seed, washing their hands, giving a gift). Ask the rest of the group to interpret the symbolic meanings behind these actions. This will introduce the idea that actions can carry deep symbolic significance, much like baptism does within the Oneness Apostolic faith.

2. Central Verse: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4

3. Body of the Lesson

Diving into Symbolism

1. **Death, Burial, and Resurrection:** Delve into the central verse, Romans 6:4, and its depiction of baptism as a symbolic act representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - The significance of each step in the process: death (repentance), burial (water baptism), and resurrection (new life).
 - How baptism is an outward representation of an inward change.
2. **Identification with Christ:** Explore how baptism in Jesus’ name is an act of identification with Him, signifying personal and public commitment to His life and teachings.
 - The concept of taking on Jesus’ name as one takes on a new identity.
 - The transformative power of identifying with Christ’s death and resurrection.
3. **A Unifying Public Declaration:** Discuss how baptism is a declaration before others, symbolizing the believer’s entry into the community of faith and their rejection of former ways.
 - The role of confession and declaration in Christian faith (Romans 10:9-10).
 - The importance of community witness and support during baptism.

4. Additional Scriptures

- Galatians 3:27 – Emphasize the act of “putting on Christ” through baptism.
- 1 Peter 3:21 – Discuss the symbolic nature of baptism as it corresponds to salvation, not as a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a good conscience.
- Matthew 28:19 – Explore the traditional baptismal command and its interpretation in Oneness theology.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What personal changes do you believe baptism signifies?
2. How does baptism in Jesus’ name serve as a personal and communal declaration of faith?
3. In what ways does the symbolic act of baptism empower you to live out your faith?

6. Closer

Action Item: Invite participants to create a piece of art or write a journal entry that reflects their own spiritual journey and the significance of baptism in their lives, emphasizing the symbolic aspects of this sacred act.

Focus for the Closing Prayer: Pray for those preparing for baptism, that they may fully grasp its symbolic significance and feel the weight and joy of what it represents. Ask for strength and conviction for all to live out the new life that baptism symbolizes. Pray for a continued deepening of the personal commitment to Christ that each person has made.

Lesson 4: Personal and Communal Declaration

1. Hook/Ice Breaker: “Stand Up for Your Name” Challenge

Gather everyone in a circle. Call out different names (common first names, but not of anyone present), and for every name called, if someone believes it has a positive meaning or connotation, they stand up. This activity will show how people can stand up for what they identify with, which segues into the idea of standing up for one’s faith and name in baptism.

2. Central Verse: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Galatians 3:27

3. Body of the Lesson

The Declaration of Faith

1. **Putting on Christ:** Explore the central verse and discuss what it means to “put on Christ” in the context of baptism. Elaborate on how this relates to a personal acceptance of Christ’s identity and mission.
 - The idea of clothing oneself with the qualities of Jesus Christ.
 - How baptism is a visual and symbolic act of taking on a new identity in Christ.
2. **Personal Commitment:** Emphasize the personal aspect of baptism as a voluntary and conscious commitment to follow Jesus Christ, contrasting it with any notion of a purely traditional or familial rite.
 - The importance of personal conviction and decision in the act of baptism.
 - The transformation that comes from making a personal declaration of faith.
3. **Community Affirmation:** Discuss the communal aspect of baptism as a public declaration to the faith community and the world. Explore how this shared experience strengthens the bonds between believers.
 - The role of the community in witnessing and affirming one’s baptism.
 - The significance of the faith community in supporting the baptized individual’s spiritual journey.

4. Additional Scriptures

- Romans 10:9-10 – The confession of faith with one’s mouth and belief in the heart.
- 1 Peter 3:21 – Baptism as an appeal to God for a clear conscience.
- Acts 22:16 – The invocation of the name of Jesus in baptism as a call to action.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What does the phrase “to put on Christ” mean to you in practical terms?
2. How does the personal decision to be baptized shape your journey of faith?
3. How can the church community support those who have made this public declaration of faith?

6. Closer

Action Item: Encourage the youth to craft their own declaration of faith, akin to a “spiritual manifesto,” which they can share with the group or a mentor for encouragement and accountability.

Focus for the Closing Prayer: Pray for the courage and strength for the youth to make their faith known both in words and deeds. Ask for opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to Christ and for the support of the community in living out this commitment. Pray that their declarations become deep-seated convictions that guide their lives.

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Lesson 5: Historical Importance and Modern Application

1. Hook/Ice Breaker: “Back to the Future” Discussion

Have the group sit in a circle and ask each person to share an invention or tradition from the past that still has a significant impact today. This will lead into the conversation on how historical practices, such as baptism in Jesus’ name, remain relevant and crucial in modern Christian faith.

2. Central Verse: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude 1:3

3. Body of the Lesson

Connecting History with Today’s Faith

- 1. The Faith Once Delivered:** Discuss the historical tradition of the early church as it pertains to the practice of baptism, and how Jude exhorts believers to remain steadfast in this shared faith.
 - The early church’s commitment to apostolic teachings and practices.
 - The significance of contending for and preserving these practices throughout history.
- 2. Modern Expressions of Ancient Truths:** Bridge the gap between the historical importance of baptism in Jesus’ name and its modern-day application and relevance.
 - The ways in which historical practices can be honored in contemporary settings.
 - The continuous thread of faith that connects modern believers to the early church.
- 3. Being History-Makers in Our Faith Journey:** Encourage participants to see themselves as part of the ongoing history of the church, contributing to the faith narrative through their own experiences and practices of baptism.
 - The role of personal testimony in the history of the church.
 - The impact of individual and collective faith actions on future generations.

4. Additional Scriptures

- Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus Christ as the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- Acts 2:42 – The early church’s devotion to apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer.
- 1 Corinthians 15:58 – The encouragement to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

5. Discussion Questions

1. How can we apply the principles of the early church to our own faith practices today?
2. Why is it important to maintain historical practices like baptism in Jesus’ name?
3. In what ways can you be a ‘history-maker’ in your faith community?

6. Closer

Action Item: Challenge the participants to make a commitment to learn more about the history of their faith and to find ways to apply that knowledge to their own lives. This could involve reading more about church history, talking to elders in the community, or even teaching others.

Focus for the Closing Prayer: Pray for the appreciation of the rich heritage of faith passed down through generations. Ask for guidance on how to carry on the traditions of the faith in ways that are authentic and relevant for today. Pray for the inspiration to live out the truths of the faith boldly, serving as a bridge between the past and the future.