



Introduction

Unit 10: Sacrament of Baptism

For a complete overview of the *Worship for Life Resource Collection*, including the 13 units as well as the lessons and enhancement pages, please refer to the Leader's Guide.

Introduction to the Worship for Life Resource Collection

Worship for Life is a collection of multidimensional materials designed to help children, as well as youth and adults, explore and experience various aspects of Christian worship. The resource collection includes a Leader's Guide and thirteen units – one on the broad theme of worship and twelve on the components of a service of worship, including Call to Worship, Invocation, Music, Confession/Assurance, Creeds, Prayer, Scripture, Proclamation, Sacrament of Baptism, Sacrament of Communion, Offering, and Benediction. The collection also includes the *Worship for Life Music CD* with recordings of the songs from the 13 units, based on the lessons for Music: Song.

Introduction to Unit 10: Sacrament of Baptism

This unit is designed to help participants learn that to enter the household of faith, they – whether children or adults – must experience the Sacrament of Baptism as an outward symbol of the inward change that comes to those who accept God's gift of forgiveness and grace. The lessons in Unit 10 use Architecture, Art, Banners/Textiles, Clown/Mime, Computer, Creative Writing, Culinary, Dance/Gesture/Movement, Drama, Games, Music, Photography, Puppetry, and Storytelling to teach the subject. Each lesson uses a consistent format of:

- **Passage** – provides the Scripture that serves as the basis for the lesson
- **Purpose** – states the theme for the lesson and the technique employed
- **Preparation** – lists all materials needed for the lesson as well as guidelines for advance preparation
- **Procedure** – outlines the three parts of the lesson
 - **Engage** – supplies the leader with the context for the lesson and a way to engage the participants in the learning experience
 - **Explore** – presents the instruction, activities, and practice for the lesson
 - **Empower** – concludes the lesson and challenges the participants to apply their learning to life



- **Possibilities** – gives possible adaptations for children younger than kindergarten and older than fifth grade
- **Participation** – suggests ways to apply the outcome of the learning in an actual service of worship

In addition to the lessons, this unit provides four Enhancement pages – Congregation’s Page, Parent’s Page, Pastor’s Page, and Teacher’s Page – and two sections called Historical Overview of Worship (pp. 99-117) and Theological Background/Reflection on Worship (pp.118-126). Finally, it contains indices with a comprehensive listing of music, Scripture, and themes.

Preparation for Unit 10: Sacrament of Baptism

- Review the Leader’s Guide of the *Worship for Life Resource Collection* for a complete overview of using the Unit, the lessons, and the enhancement pages.
- Read Framework (pp. 5-6) to understand the overarching theme, Scripture passage, and goals that undergird this section of the resource collection.
- Read Overview (pp. 6-7) for background information on the theme of the Sacrament of Baptism.
- Review Historical Overview of Worship (pp. 99-117) and Theological Background/Reflection on Worship (pp. 118-126).

Preparation for Each Lesson

- Read the Scripture for the lesson.
- Read the lesson selected for the presentation in its entirety.
- Gather the supplies, recruit any help needed, and set up the room.
- Complete any advance preparation requirements for the learning activity.
- Pray for the children, their families, and the leaders.

Framework

Theme – Sacrament of Baptism: Claiming the Promise

In order for Christians to enter the household of faith, they – whether children or adults – must experience the Sacrament of Baptism as an outward symbol of the inward change that comes to those who accept God’s gift of forgiveness and grace.

Scripture

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.’” Matthew 28:18-19



Goals

Each participant will use varied methods to discover that the Sacrament of Baptism empowers us to love God with “all your heart, all your soul, and all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), and – as Jesus added – “all your mind” (Matthew 22:37-39). Through methods employing multiple intelligences strategies, participants will:

- **Heart (Emotional):** Experience the certainty of personal connection to God’s redeeming love and the assurance of the welcoming embrace of God’s family of faith.
- **Soul (Spiritual):** Affirm the way of life represented in baptism, linking the water of the sacrament with both inward and outward change.
- **Might (Physical):** Connect the message of the sacrament with the meaning of faith throughout the church year, understanding there are many forms and methods of Christian baptism, as well as various places, times, and participants.
- **Mind (Intellectual):** Understand the biblical and historical basis for baptism, including the recognition of words, themes, and patterns used in the sacrament, especially the emphasis on the Trinity.

Overview

But we, little fishes, after the example of our *ichthus*, (the Greek word for “fish”) Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water.

– Tertullian, ca. 200 AD

The Sacrament of Baptism is at the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus began his public ministry after going to John for baptism in the Jordan River, and from the book of Acts we know that the first Christians considered baptism to be the ritual of initiation into the church.

In the New Testament we can see that baptism already has several important meanings in the first century. To begin with, it is a mark of repentance. John the baptizer preached repentance, and, as we have already noted, Jesus identified with John’s message in his own baptism. Furthermore, on the day of Pentecost, when the church was born following Jesus’ ascension into heaven, Peter preaches repentance to the crowd of Jews gathered in Jerusalem: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven” (Acts 2:38). Peter goes on to proclaim a second meaning of baptism: “and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Thus, in this very first Christian sermon, Peter shows that baptism involves human action – repentance – and God’s gift – the Spirit.



Contributor

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The apostle Paul, in Romans 6:3, stresses the importance of baptism when he asks: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” He goes on to say that in baptism Christians die with Christ so that we may be resurrected with Christ. In other words, baptism means death to our old life in order to be raised into Christ’s new life. In a similar way Jesus himself, in the Gospel of John, tells Nicodemus that he must be born again – or, more literally, “from above” – and declares: “No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). The early third century African Christian, Tertullian, alludes to this theme of birth when he states that Christians are “born in water.”

Yet, Tertullian also says that, like fish – a wonderful pun on the Greek word *ichthys*, which was a commonly used symbol for Christ – we must abide in water or we die. Baptism, then, is not merely our initiation into the church. Indeed, baptism is a way of life: a life of repentance, empowered by the Spirit, dying to self, embracing the new life Jesus continually offers us.

Over the centuries, some churches have stressed baptism as a rite for adults, often called “believer’s baptism,” while others have embraced the practice of infant baptism, which is baptizing the children of believers. However, as the Scriptures show, we all must become as little children. Therefore, we can say that truly all baptism is “infant” baptism – we must all be born again, and that all baptism certainly involves belief – the faith of the church as the body of Christ being primary. In short, baptism is joining with the Christian community to take up the cross and sharing in the life and ministry of Jesus. This is a serious matter for Christians of any age and in any age.