

and 4 we see that baptism is itself a symbol of putting that sinful nature to death under the water and rising to that new life in Christ. We aren't just cleaned up versions of our old self, we are a totally new creations.

Many of us have thought of baptism as "washing away our sins". While it is true, we are cleansed of our sin, how does the image of washing differ from the idea of dying? Why do you feel it was necessary to die to the old nature rather than clean it up?

Matthew 28:18-19 NLT - 18 Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is part of Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28. Jesus himself commanded us to make disciples, and to baptize those who would follow Him; not because baptism saves them, but as a witness of their decision to become Jesus's disciple.

It is good to remember our baptism. When you were baptized, what were your thoughts and feelings? What was the reaction of family and friends?

WRAP-UP

At New Life we are passionately committed to becoming fully alive in Jesus. When we live this way, we believe we reflect Jesus and the realities of His Kingdom. So, we are dedicated to journeying with people as they discover they are deeply and authentically loved by Jesus, shaped by Jesus and sent to do what Jesus did. For those who feel called to join us in this mission, we invite you to learn more about New Life and consider membership. Or if you have committed your life to Jesus but never been baptized, please contact our office and we will be happy to arrange for your baptism.

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

Challenge- If you want to find out more about becoming a member of New Life, you can view any of our 4 Crash Course sessions online. Go to newlifepismo.com/crashcourse and register. You will be sent online access to the course.

"Celebration Sunday"

INTRODUCTION

At our Celebration Sunday services we welcomed new members into our church, affirmed the decision of parents who dedicated their children to the Lord, and we rejoiced with those who publicly declared their decision to follow Jesus through the sacrament of baptism. Let's take a few moments to reflect on the significance of each of these.

Ice Breaker

When was the last time you threw a party and what was it for?

Key Passage

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Matthew 28:19*

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Membership

We invite everyone who is interested in being part of the ministry and mission of Jesus through New Life Church to find out who we are and what we believe, in order to decide whether or not you want to commit to our congregation through membership. Here are a few of the major points you should know about us. (To find out all the answers to this in detail, you can take our 4-part series called Crash Course.)

- Nazarene- New Life is part of the Nazarene denomination.
 - The Nazarene denomination is a body of believers proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and affirming the historic Trinitarian creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith.

There is a long list of the creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith, and you may not know all of them, but what would you say are some of the foundational beliefs you feel are essential to the Christian faith? Do you know what is contained in the Apostles Creed?

- Holiness- We believe that the Holy Spirit cleanses us from all sin, renews us in the image of God, empowers us to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, and produces in us the character of Christ.
 - As God's Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Jesus, we become increasingly holy. The word holy, *qadowsh* in the Old Testament, refers to something that was set apart for God; something pure and untainted. The more our lives are changed to reflect the character of Christ, the more holy we become. As the Holy Spirit does His work, the evidence of our pure and unmixed love is seen in the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 NLT - 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Look at the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22 -23. How would you put them in order of the most evident to the least evident in your life? Which would you most want to see grow in your life?

- Missional- We are a sent people, responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom.

At New Life you will hear us say that we are Loved by Jesus, Shaped by Jesus and equipped to Do what Jesus Did. In our key verse, Matthew 28:19 Jesus said, "Go and make disciples". We do this by sharing the Good News of God's kingdom and through the gifts God has given us. When we commit to membership, we bind ourselves uniquely to this community of believers so that we can blend our unique gifts and talents to help everyone to live fully alive in Jesus.

What are some of the gifts God has uniquely placed in you? What opportunities have you seen to use those gifts?

2. Child Dedication

We believe baptism is appropriate when an individual is able to understand the significance of a life-long decision to live as a disciple of Jesus. But before reaching an age of understanding, parents may wish to publicly commit their child into God's hands and pray for God's direction and blessing in their child's life. We do this through Child Dedication.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NLT - 4 "Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. 5 And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. 6 And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. 7 Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. 8 Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

As Moses instructed the people of Israel before they entered the Promised Land, He reminded them of what God commanded, and then he instructed them in how to pass that faith to their children. What do you notice about how they are to do this? Why do you think the priests weren't given primary responsibility to instruct the children in faith?

3. Baptism

The sacrament of baptism is the symbol of both our death to the old nature, and of God's grace offering to rescue us and give us as new life in Christ.

Romans 6:1-4 NLT - 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.

In Rom 6:2 Paul says we have died to sin. Our old sinful nature died when we accepted Jesus as our Lord. (2 Cor 5:17) This doesn't mean we will never sin, but that sin does not characterize our way of life, and it is against the nature of our "new life" to sin. In fact, in Romans 6 verses 3