

## Discussion Questions

### Lesson One: What Is Baptism?

*Do I Have To?*- Baptism is an outward sign of an inward, spiritual grace. Is this outward sign necessary?

*New Me, New You?* -How does baptism make us new?

*God's Family* -Baptism means being part of God's family in a particular way. What does that mean to you?

### Lesson Two: Why Be Baptized?

*Are We In This Together?* -By saying that a benefit of baptism is living in a community that upholds each other with prayer, kindness and commitment, Kitch reminds us that baptism is not something we do alone. What are your thoughts on this?

*Just Say Yes* -Instead of just saying "no" (the renunciations and turnings during Baptism), Anne suggests that we also say "yes." Why is "no" insufficient? Review the actions she suggests we say "yes" to. How do they differ from the "no's"?

*Fire Insurance Or New Life* - How can we remove Baptism from the clutches of "fire insurance" mode, to a state of life that makes no sense without the love of Christ?

### Lesson Three: What Is the History of Baptism?

*Your Stance* -If you were to prepare adults for baptism, and you were required to prepare the content the instruction and preparation, what would you say?

*Is It Optional?* -Throughout time, different Christian traditions have understood baptism differently. Is baptism then simply a matter of interpretation that is optional?

*Nature Or Nurture?* -"There is something wonderful about adult conversion, and coming with full knowledge into a life of Christ, and there's also something wonderful about being born into a church family and being raised with that community." What do you think? Discuss the pros and cons.

### Lesson Four: What Is a Baptismal Covenant?

*To Love Come What May* - How do you live the promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Is this difficult? Why is it such an important promise?

*Human Dignity* - How do we, living in this world, respect the dignity of every human being? What does that mean to you?

*Proclaiming The Word* - How does this promise resonate with you - "to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ"? Is this something that we are easily or readily moved to do?

## The Takeaway

**What Is Baptism?** Simply put, Christian baptism is an initiation, a new beginning, nothing less than new life. The two elements are water (blessed by prayer) and ancient words (which come from Scripture). Specifically, in the final chapter of the gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives the disciples the gift of these words, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20a) This is also known as The Great Commission. People are not baptized into a denomination but into the Christian Church. This course will discuss what baptism looks like in particular in the Episcopal Church, according to both Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer. The Book of Common Prayer explains the sacrament of baptism as "full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit," an "indissoluble bond" (p298). "Full" means complete: nothing else is needed; "Indissoluble" is a water word: our baptismal bond cannot be dissolved. Finally, baptism is a sacrament, "an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace."

**Why Be Baptized?** Baptism is always about immersing in the Holy Spirit, whether we sprinkle water or dunk someone. Most people, when asked, will say they see baptism as a form of protection; while clearly, the early Church saw it as a rite of initiation and a commitment to following Christ, as Christianity spread it became more focused on cleansing from sin and keeping someone out of Hell. However, it's really about how we live our lives every day. It's about making disciples, being a follower of Christ, about community. In the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, one can see this emphasis on community and belonging to the Body of Christ. Benefits include living into a community that upholds each other with prayer and kindness and commitment. Baptism has some requirements: renunciations and turnings. We renounce Satan, repent of sin, turn away from the sinful desires of our heart that turn us from the love of God. We say yes to accepting Christ as our savior, open ourselves to His love and grace, to obey Christ. Choosing to be baptized invites you into an incredible new life.

**What Is the History of Baptism?** Jesus did get baptized, by John the Baptist, but it wasn't Christian baptism. John offered a baptism of repentance but also said something better was coming. There are all sorts of cleansing ceremonies with water throughout history but they are not the same. When Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit descended and the world – and baptism – have never been the same. Baptism brings the Holy Spirit and God's presence to us even after Jesus' ascension. After this, people who wanted to become Christians went through a period of preparation and then were baptized. The Apostles' Creed is an early baptismal formula. It professes threefold belief: in God the Father, Jesus his Son who died and rose again, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout time different Christian traditions have understood baptism differently. Even today, different denominations understand baptism differently.

**What Is the Baptismal Covenant?** A covenant is a sacred agreement. In the Church, it means a promise or agreement or contract between God and God's people, us. God is always faithful but we aren't, so we need to remind ourselves of that covenant and return. When we renew our own baptismal covenants during the service of baptism, we are striving to be faithful to our promise. It's based on the Apostles' Creed and on three questions: Do you believe in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit? These outline our understanding of our triune faith in God and the answers are a basic outline of the Christian faith. The second half of the Baptismal Covenant includes 5 promises we make about our life in Christ; these were new to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and expanded on an earlier question which asked, Do you promise to uphold the creeds of the Church? They also expand on what that means and how we do it. The 5 promises are as follows. 1) Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and the prayers. 2) Persevere in resisting evil and repent and return when you sin. 3) Proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ. 4) Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself. 5) Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

## Share Your Learning

We believe the Holy Spirit joined you in this class and would not be surprised if you learned a couple of things that inspired you and may inspire others.

So here's the assignment: Simply write down something that touched you in a sentence or two. Here are some examples: Clare from Texas took the course "Introducing Christian Stewardship with Kristine Miller" and writes, "*God doesn't want our money, God just wants us to want it less.*" Robert from North Carolina took "Introducing the Book of Common Prayer with Roger Ferlo" and writes, "*I learned that 70% of the Book of Common Prayer is directly quoted or paraphrased from the Bible, no wonder I like it so much!*"

If you want to add an image, that works too. Now simply post it to your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, or Google+ account with the hashtag: #churchnext

Not only will you inspire your friends, but your post will show up on the **churchnext.tv** home page for the whole community to see. Thanks for sharing your learning!

## Notes

# Christian Baptism

with

**Anne Kitch**

Participant's Guide

Welcome!

There may be no more transformative moment in one's life than one's baptism.

Baptism is an invitation to accept God's gift of love and grace more fully into our lives. This is why initiation into the Christian faith is not taken lightly by most Christians or churches.

In this course, Anne Kitch teaches us the basics of Christian baptism. She realizes that every denomination has a slightly different take on what baptism means and how it's done. And since she's an Episcopal priest, she will reference The Book of Common Prayer and its baptismal liturgy. However, you may still find this course to be a helpful course if you are considering baptism in another denomination.

Here are the topics of Anne's lectures:

- What Is Baptism?
- Why Be Baptized?
- What Is the History of Baptism?
- What Is the Baptismal Covenant?

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