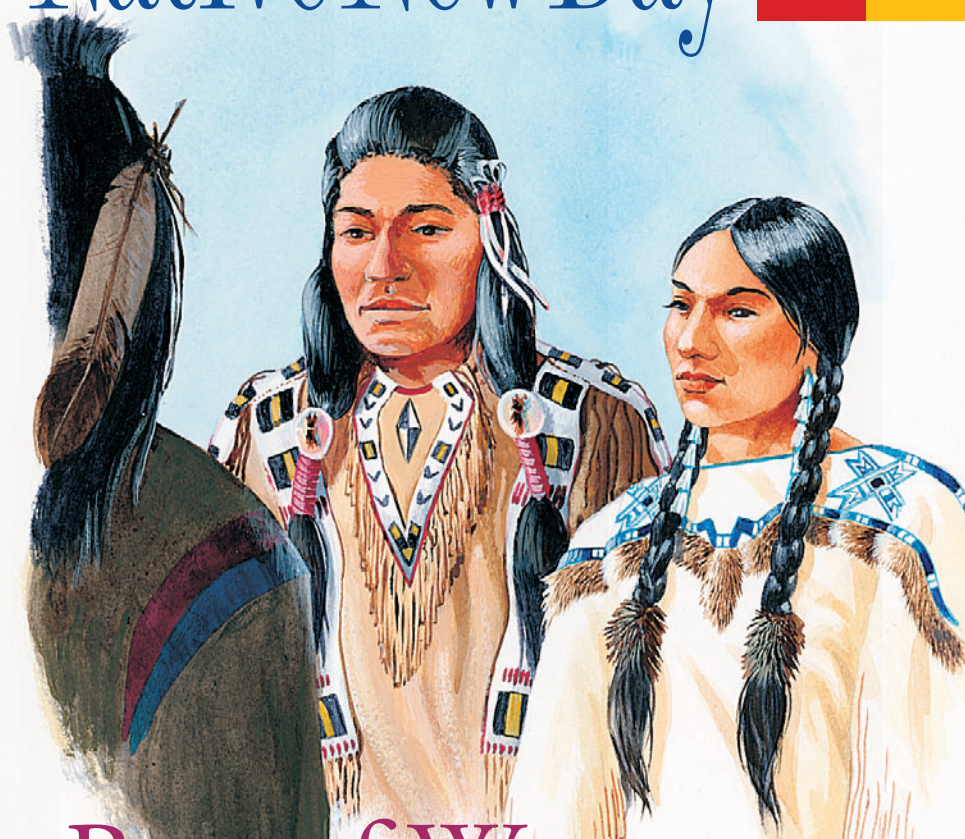


Native New Day

24



Born of Water and the Spirit

Today young couples are asking why is it so important to get married when they love each other and wish to live together. Many ask what the importance is of a marriage ceremony or of a piece of paper stating you are married. Many elders today know there are several sound reasons for legally getting married.



Commitment brings security and trust to all those who are involved in any type of relationship.

First of all, being married gives lasting security to a wonderful love relationship. It is interesting that a high percentage of couples who live together prior to marriage will eventually part company. These statistics tell us that living together without commitment can bring tremendous insecurity also to the happiness of their children. It is a principle of life that parental commitment brings the needed security for proper development of the tender lives of children. The world honors those who have purpose and commitment in life. Commitment brings security and trust to all those who are involved in any type of relationship.

Marriage helps illustrate the step of faith that God asks all of us to take. Baptism, like marriage, will bring us benefits that we never thought possible. When we are baptized, we make a public statement to our friends, to God, and to the whole universe that we have made a definite choice to allow God to control our life.

Key Thought. Baptism is a public statement that we have decided to follow God's leading and His plans for us. We now belong to God's family and are a child of God.

Baptism is like marriage in that we have chosen to link ourselves to a strong Partner to help us with life's burdens and prepare us for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. A believer's relationship with God also gives security that God's long-range plans for our life will be

realized, in spite of the heartaches we face here on Earth.

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we begin a journey with Him. Like a marriage service, the baptismal ceremony reveals to our family and friends that we have begun our journey together with the One we dearly love. To continually have His help and security, we must stay close to God. If we do, He has promised to always be by our side, even though we may get discouraged at times. Baptism is an important step in God's plan of saving us from this world of sin.

Baptism, like marriage, makes a public statement that we have made a definite choice to follow Jesus.



BIBLE ANSWERS

1. What must happen to everyone who becomes a citizen of Jesus' kingdom? John 3:3. "Jesus answered and said 'unless one is _____, he cannot see the kingdom of God' " *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

Note. To be "born again" is to experience an inner change brought about by the Holy Spirit described as "fruit" of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16; John 3:7-8; Ephesians 4:24). This new birth starts life in a new and different direction. Baptism openly shows that with God's help we are choosing to begin living a lifestyle according to God's plan. God will help us begin this new life, and we will then see how everything He has asked us to do brings true happiness.

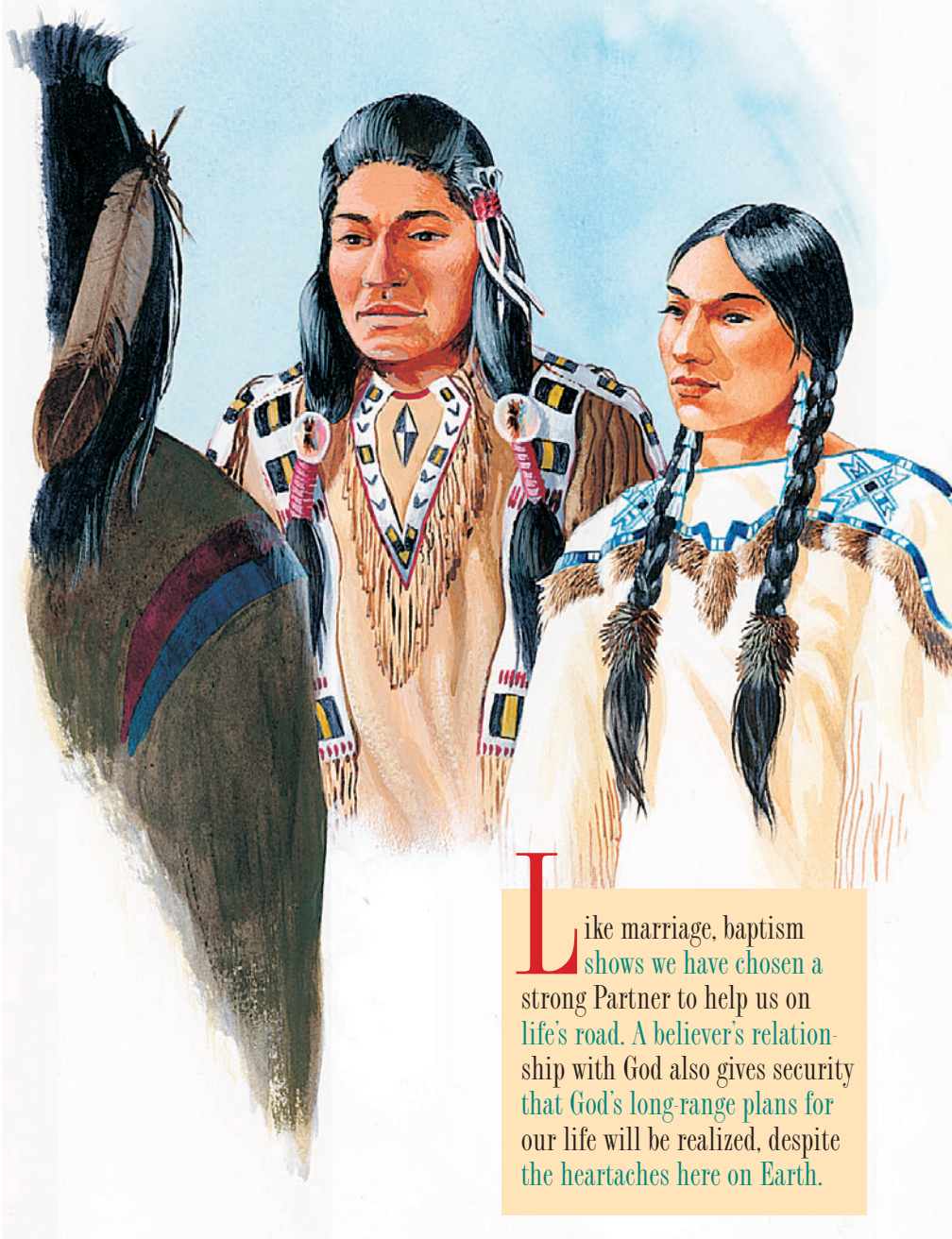
When we are “born again,” we will desire to turn away from sin and want to live according to God’s ways instead of our ways. We will realize more and more that without God’s help we can do nothing to make ourselves into good people. This experience of spiritual growth and development comes through the work of the Holy Spirit on our minds and hearts. Our part is simply “allowing” God to help us.

The new birth starts life in a new and different direction.

2. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost fifty days after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, crowds of people heard the good news about Jesus. What question did they ask, and how did Peter answer their question? Acts 2:37-38.

“Men and brethren, _____?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be _____ in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the _____.’”

Note. Receiving the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit was of supreme importance to the new Christian church. When spreading abroad the Good News about Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to help them live victoriously, these newly baptized, Spirit-filled believers were “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).



Like marriage, baptism shows we have chosen a strong Partner to help us on life's road. A believer's relationship with God also gives security that God's long-range plans for our life will be realized, despite the heartaches here on Earth.

In a conversation with Nicodemus, a community leader who came to Jesus one night, Jesus declared, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “Born of . . . the Spirit” describes entering a new life and undergoing a change of mind and heart by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and help us. Entering the kingdom of God involves a completely new kind of living. It’s not just an old life patched up; it is called the new birth. Being born of the Spirit is important. Water baptism is the outward symbol of Jesus forgiving us and cleansing us of our sins. It is also recognition of our commitment to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us.

3. What method of baptism does the Bible teach? Compare Romans 6:3-5 and Acts 8:36-39. Circle one.
(1) By sprinkling water. (2) By being immersed.

Note. In Romans 6:3-5 we find the Christians of the New Testament being baptized by immersion in water. Whenever the Bible talks about baptism, it uses a word which means “to immerse.” The reason for following this method of baptism is significant. Baptism symbolizes



God offers us abundant new life, a change of heart and mind, and a new direction.

Water baptism is the outward symbol of Jesus forgiving us and cleansing us from sin.

that we personally accept Jesus' death and burial (represented by our burial under the water) and Jesus' resurrection (represented by our coming up out of the water).

We find that when Jesus was baptized He was dipped under the water in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:13-17). It would be impossible to illustrate Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for us by any other form of baptism, such as being sprinkled. The Bible says we are "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). Baptism is like a funeral, a formal farewell to an existence in which sin dominated. Then we are lifted up out of the water just like a person being resurrected from the grave, and God empowers us to live a completely new life.

Only immersion can accurately illustrate the true meaning of baptism—death, burial, and rebirth.

4. What does it really mean to die with Christ?

Romans 6:6, NIV. "For we know that our old self was _____ with him so that the body of sin might be done away with [rendered powerless], that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

Note. Baptism represents outwardly what a person must do inside—surrender everything to Jesus. If we inten-

Baptism symbolizes that we personally accept Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. It also demonstrates we are forgiven of the past and are rising to a new life in Christ.



tionally hold anything back from God we will likely remain “slaves” to sins we hold on to. God will work in you to change anything that He wants you to change, if you will but allow it. Our transformation will not happen all at once. As you continually identify with Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection through baptism and your daily life, you invite a powerful force into your life. The



apostle Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

If we tap into the power of Christ's death and resurrection, we'll see more and more good qualities replac-

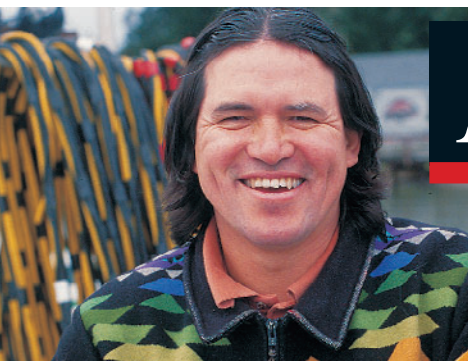
ing our old habits. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus changes things in us that we could never do for ourselves. It’s not that we come out of the baptismal waters perfect, never to sin again, but “Christ lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death” (Romans 8:2, J.B. Phillips translation). We then begin to leave behind one sinful problem or habit after another.



“... If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away . . . all things have become new”
(2 Corinthians 5:17).

When we walk “according to the Spirit,” He will help us understand things we have never understood before (Romans 8:1). We will be given a greater “desire” to do what is right. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit will affect our home and business life, as well as the fun things we do. It changes our eating, drinking, and spending habits. It changes our bad language and helps us to become victorious over our deep-seated addictions. The changes will be noticed by family and friends.

The Holy Spirit will strengthen our will to hold on to God for help, so that He can help us in our struggles to overcome addictive problems like drinking, smoking, and other destructive behavior. We will actually grow to hate the evil things we once loved, and we will come to love the good things that we didn't like before.



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As you identify with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection through baptism and your daily life, you invite a powerful force for good into your life.

5. How important is our baptism? Mark 16:16. “He who believes and is baptized will be _____; but he who does not believe will be _____.”

Note. This text teaches us that when we know what God is offering to us, it's important that we step out and follow His leading for our lives. Those who don't obey aren't condemned because God is angry with them; it's simply that God can't help and give gifts to those who don't willingly choose to accept His blessings.

6. Can we be baptized more than once? Acts 19:1-5. (*Circle one.*) (1) Yes. (2) No.

Note. This instance in the Bible indicates that under certain circumstances a person may be rebaptized—baptized a

second time. Or rebaptism may be called for when a person who has drifted away from God decides to come back to Him and live righteously with God's help. It's clear that in this Bible instance rebaptism took place when one learned great new life-altering truths that weren't understood before.

7. When new believers were added to the church, in what ceremony did they participate? Acts 2:41,

47. "Then those who gladly received his word were _____; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Note. It is natural for baptized Christians to follow the Lord's plan of assembling together that we might strengthen each other by our fellowship (Hebrews 10:25). It is also God's plan that we work together as a body, pooling

Baptism symbolizes the believer is beginning a new life in Christ.





our talents and resources for the work of saving others. The Lord tells us that as Christians we all become “ministers of the gospel” to those about us (1 Peter 2:9; John 15:16).

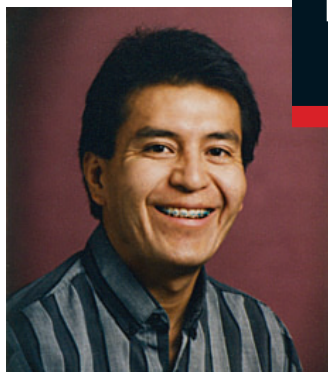
We aren’t saved because we belong to a church. We are saved by Jesus and through Him alone (Acts 4:12; Matthew 1:21). The church is simply one of God’s greatest tools to keep us close to Jesus, helping us remember that without Him we can do nothing.



We aren’t saved by belonging to a church. We are saved by Jesus and through Him alone. But the church is one of God’s greatest tools to keep us close to Jesus.

Closing Thought. Baptism by immersion is a wonderful opportunity given to us by our Creator. It’s a door God has given us that we can open by choice and which will unlock blessings and gifts for us. It symbolizes that the believer has chosen to begin a walk with Jesus. Have you taken this step of baptism? You can; God longs for you to do so.

If you are interested in being baptized or if you have questions, speak or write to the person giving you these study guides.



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here is great
peace of mind
when we open our
hearts to God's love
for us and His lead-
ing in our lives.



“I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Next Lesson. We will deal with God’s plan concerning His church on Earth. Today there are hundreds of different church organizations in our country. If Jesus were on the earth today, which one would He attend?



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