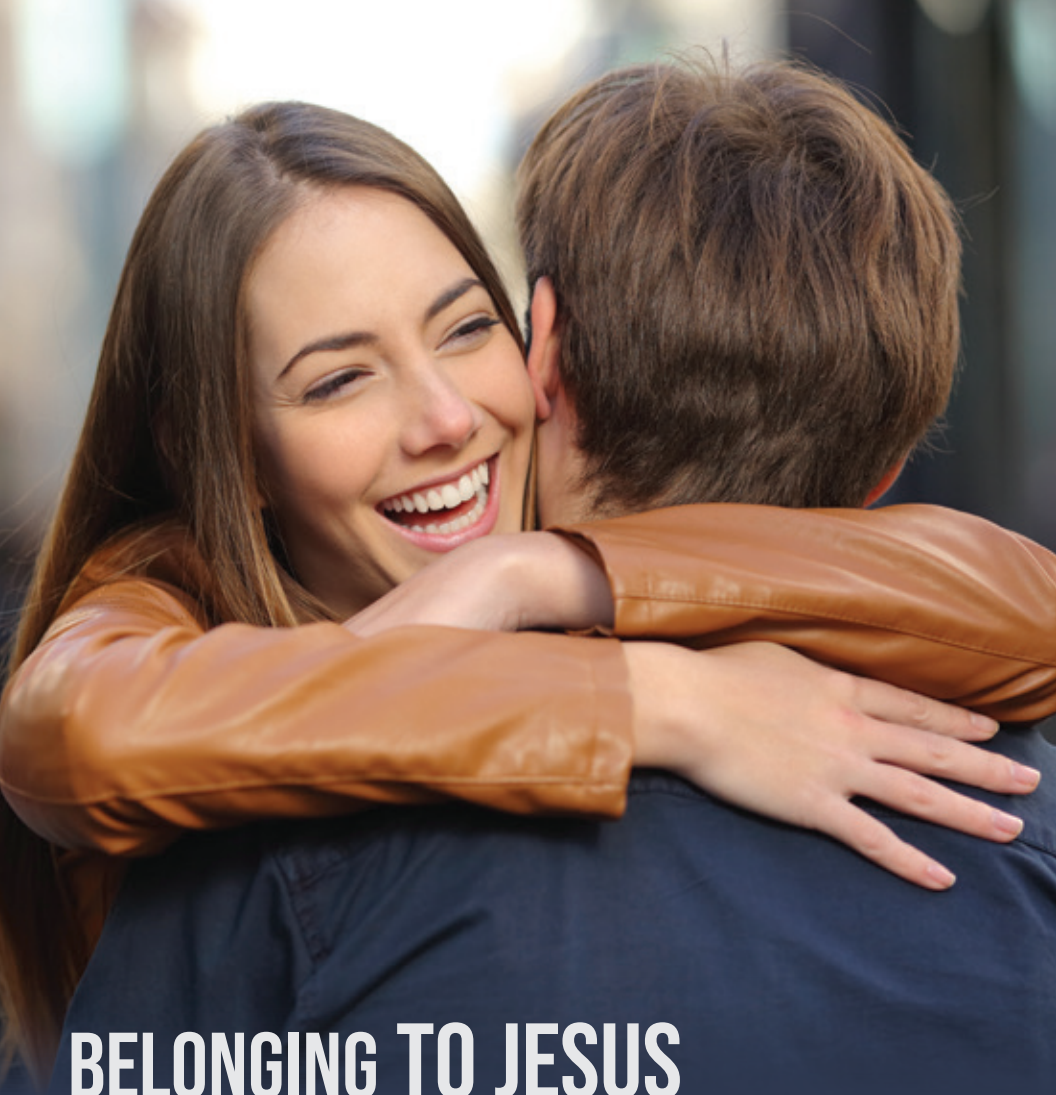




 **3ABN** BIBLE STUDY GUIDES
Searching Deeper

BELONGING TO JESUS



BELONGING TO JESUS

A young man and woman in love want to unite their lives in marriage. With attention to every detail, he arranges the moment to ask, “Will you be my wife?” Her answer comes with excitement: “Yes, Yes, Yes!” Then he adds a few more words, “I’ve enjoyed getting to know you, but can we keep our engagement a secret? Actually, I would like to keep our whole marriage a secret, if you don’t mind. I don’t want anyone to know I’ve committed my life to you, especially my family and friends.” We wouldn’t be surprised if their engagement comes to a quick end, would we? God has made a way for us to unite with Him *and* tell the world we love Him—and that He loves us, too. Instead of hiding what God has done in our lives, we can show the world that “Jesus is my Friend!”

1 How has God shown us His love and power?

Revelation 1:18 “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

God’s love was demonstrated with certainty when Jesus died for our sins. Then God’s power over death was revealed when Jesus rose on the third day. Death had no power to hold Jesus in the tomb (Acts 2:24).

2 What promise has God made about His power that raised Jesus from the grave?

Romans 8:11 “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

God doesn’t keep His power over sin and death to Himself. He promises that the power that raised Jesus from the grave is also available to us through the Holy Spirit. This is the reason for every Christian’s hope. God, “according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

3 How does God invite us to claim His promised power over sin and death?

Colossians 2:11–12 “In Him you were ... 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.”

Through the act of baptism, we publicly identify with Jesus’ victory over death and consent to having His life-giving power work in our lives.

4 What is baptism?

John 3:23 “Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there...”

Matthew 3:11 “I indeed baptize you with water ...”

Matthew 3:5–6 (NASB) “... and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River ...”

The word “baptize” means to completely immerse beneath the surface. Baptism is the act of going “down into the water” (Acts 8:38), and “coming up from the water” (Mark 1:10). The value of baptism is not a physical washing. The real significance is in what baptism represents.

5 What does the symbol of baptism represent?

Romans 6:3–4 “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Baptism is God’s way for us to accept the power of Jesus’ death, His burial in the tomb, and His resurrection. When we are buried under the water, we act out our faith that Jesus died to forgive our sins. Then, by being raised up from the water, we demonstrate faith that Jesus gives us His power to live a new life of victory over sin. When we are baptized, we celebrate Jesus’ death and resurrection by telling the world, “I’ve united my life with Jesus, and I am thankful to obey Him!” If we substitute a different symbol, or replace baptism with sprinkling or a verbal declaration, we say that salvation comes through something other than Jesus’ death and resurrection which baptism represents.

6 How did Jesus’ followers put the true meaning of baptism into action?

Philip baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8:35–38 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

God directed Philip to explain the Scriptures to a man returning to his home in Ethiopia. With genuine faith based on this new understanding of Jesus from the Bible, the Ethiopian chose to be baptized where there was a body of water they could go down into. This began his new life of following Jesus.

Paul and Silas baptized the Philippian Jailer – Acts 16:29–34 (NASB) “And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas; and after he brought them out, he said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of God to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his



“God directed Philip to explain the Scriptures to a man returning to his home in Ethiopia.”

house and set food before them, and was overjoyed, since he had become a believer in God together with his whole household.”

When God shook open the prison doors, Paul and Silas demonstrated the love of God by refusing to escape, since it would have endangered their jail-keeper’s life. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, the jailer desired assurance of salvation from the God Whose power and love he had just witnessed both in the earthquake and now from these men. The two missionaries gave the simple instruction that he must personally believe in Jesus Christ; and when the gospel message was explained in greater detail, the jailer and his family believed and were baptized.

7 What example did Jesus set for us?

Matthew 3:13–15 “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him.”

Jesus had no sin to be washed away (1 Peter 2:22). Still, He chose to be baptized publicly by immersion (Matthew 3:16). His example showed God’s righteous plan for us, who do need to be forgiven and cleansed from sin.

8 Will the water of baptism wash away our sins?

Revelation 1:5 “... To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”

The cleansing from sin is not the result of water. Only Jesus’ death can wash away sin and make us pure. The symbol of baptism shows that we trust in God’s power to give us a fresh start—with our sins forgiven.



“Baptism is an object lesson showing that our love of sin needs to die and be buried.”

Baptism is “not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21 NIV).

9 What attitude toward sin must accompany baptism?

Matthew 3:5–6 “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”

Acts 2:37–38 “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...’”

We need to honestly confess our sins from our heart to accept God’s forgiveness, because God can’t wash away the guilt we refuse to admit we have (Psalm 51:1–3, 17). That would be like trying to clean a pig while it is still rolling in the mud! God also will not forcibly remove sins that we love too much to surrender. Baptism is an object lesson showing that our love of sin needs to die and be buried. Then God can teach us His new way of living. That’s God’s power of resurrection. “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions ...” (Psalm 51:2–3).

10 Who can be baptized?

Mark 16:15–16 “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’”

Anyone who is old enough to understand the basic teachings of the Bible can be baptized, because they choose to believe. To believe, we need to hear the good news of salvation. “... And how shall they believe

in Him of whom they have not heard? ...” (Romans 10:14). If we don’t believe the good news that Jesus will forgive our sins, then we won’t confess our sins to Him, and we will remain condemned.

Even if we are baptized together with others, our reason to be baptized should be that we have made our own decision to believe (Acts 18:8). No one else can make that decision for us—or be baptized in our place (Ezekiel 14:12–14).

11 What preparation comes before we are baptized?

Matthew 28:18–20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ...’”

Becoming a disciple means we are learning what the Bible teaches. This is an important part of believing in Jesus. In the book of Acts, about 3,000 people were baptized because of what they learned about Jesus as Peter preached. They chose to be baptized after they “gladly received his word” (Acts 2:41). We don’t need to wait to be baptized until we have learned everything there is to know because we will always be growing in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). After we choose to be baptized, we continue studying and learning from all parts of the Bible.

12 When is the right time to be baptized?

Acts 22:16 “‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’”

Psalms 119:60 “I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.”

Baptism is a decisive choice that confirms we have begun our growing Christian life. When we delay making our commitment to God, it becomes easier to continue delaying until we no longer sense God’s conviction. Our one lifetime is the opportunity to respond to God, because we do not choose after we die (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6).

13 Do Christians ever need to be baptized again?

Some have been baptized without understanding its meaning or what the Bible teaches (Acts 19:1–5). Others have rejected salvation through Jesus after being baptized, and later return to God. For these individuals, rebaptism shows their desire to begin a new life with God through a fuller understanding of God’s Word. But we don’t need to be rebaptized every time we make a mistake or discover something new in the Bible.



“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

14 Should we wait until we have no sin before we are baptized?

1 John 1:8–9 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Baptism isn't God's promise that we are now perfect, or that we will have no more battles with sin. It is our choice to unite with God's will, rather than fight against it. “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Philippians 3:12). In fact, temptations from our past might come back to us after we are baptized. Satan tempts us to be discouraged because of our weaknesses, but God promises to help us when we are tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13). The more we study Jesus' character, the more our old habits will lose their attractiveness and power (2 Corinthians 3:18).

15 Will God give us a special feeling after we are baptized?

Psalms 42:5 “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

The change that baptism represents goes deeper than feelings that can come and go. Even when we have feelings of discouragement, we trust God's promise that the Holy Spirit is our Helper. Then, as we experience God's grace that gives us strength, even our feelings will begin to change into joy and praise. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation...” (Isaiah 61:10).

16 What kind of changes take place in our life when we believe in Jesus and are baptized?

Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Imagine a beautiful garment God gives you to wear. That beautiful covering is the righteousness of Jesus, and God can only give it to those who choose to accept it. Jesus' righteousness doesn't cover sins that we still gather around ourselves. Rather, with our willing consent, God helps us to remove the sins from our life so we can be beautifully covered. When we are baptized, we don't just try on our own to become a better person. Instead, our old life is “buried with Him in baptism” (Colossians 2:12), and God gives us a new start, so we may live a new life that pleases Him.

John 3:3–5 “Jesus answered and said to [Nicodemus], ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

Nicodemus was a religious leader, but he still needed to start over spiritually, as if he was going back to the day he was born. When we believe in Jesus, God helps us to start over so that even habits of our past will change. Jesus compared this to being born a second time, and it was not enough that water is part of our new beginning. Just like Nicodemus, we need help that water alone can't provide—we need the Spirit.

17 What important help does God promise to those who believe and are baptized?

Acts 2:38 “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Receiving the Holy Spirit is not a one-time experience, an instantaneous change, or a feeling that takes control of us. The Holy Spirit provides the power to change our old life of sin. “... According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:5–6). Even before we ask for God's



“We must cooperate with God to replace our old life of sin.”

forgiveness, the Holy Spirit is prompting us to believe in Jesus. Then to the baptized believers, God continues to give the Holy Spirit more and more when we keep on asking in faith (Luke 11:13). This is what Jesus promised to His disciples so they could tell others about him. “... John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:5, 8).

18 So what should we do after we have been baptized?

Romans 6:11–13 “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

We must cooperate with God to replace our old life of sin. While God makes changes in us, we choose to trust and obey Him (Ezekiel 36:26–27). This lifelong experience is called *sanctification*. When we continue to study God’s character and claim His promises in the Bible, He gives us His righteous character so that even our thoughts and habits begin to look like Jesus. This is why, in reference to the church, Paul says that God wants to “sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26, emphasis supplied).

19 How does baptism strengthen our relationship with each other?

1 Corinthians 12:12–13 “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”

We don’t follow Jesus by ourselves. When Peter preached the gospel, those who believed and were baptized were welcomed into the church,

the body of Christ (Acts 2:41, 47). Jesus is “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18), and each member is an active worker to share the gospel with others. Baptism unites us with a family of believers where members help and encourage each other. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

20 Do we have to be baptized in order to be forgiven and saved?

Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Forgiveness and salvation are a gift we can’t earn, even by baptism. Baptism is our response of faith that shows we accept God’s gift. Baptism is pleasing to God (Luke 3:22), is the example Jesus set (Matthew 3:14–15), and is His command to His disciples (Matthew 28:19). When Jesus is our Friend, it is our privilege to be baptized as a sign of our faith in Him.

21 What about those who never were able to be baptized?

John 10:9 “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

Forgiveness comes through Jesus, and many people who trust in Him have not learned about baptism (Acts 19:1–5). This includes people who lived before Jesus died for us. Others, like the thief who died on the cross next to Jesus, never had the opportunity to be baptized (Luke 23:40–43). When this dying thief expressed his genuine faith, Jesus promised him eternal life in Heaven with Him upon His return. Today, we have the privilege to both learn about Jesus’ death and resurrection and participate in God’s gift of baptism. We can gratefully say, “Yes, Lord, I make my choice. I choose You.”

GOD’S BLESSINGS LEAD US TO BAPTISM	GOD’S BLESSINGS CONTINUE AFTER BAPTISM
1. Belief in Jesus (Mark 16:16)	7. A new beginning (2 Corinthians 5:17)
2. Repentance from sin (Matthew 3:11)	8. Help from the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)
3. Confession of sin (Matthew 3:5–6)	9. Cooperation with God (James 4:7–8)
4. Forgiveness of sin (Mark 1:4)	10. Unity in the church (Romans 12:4–5)
5. Instruction for salvation (Matthew 28:19–20)	11. Cultivating fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)
6. Knowledge of the gospel (Acts 16:32–33)	12. Changed life with Jesus (Romans 6:4)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY LIFE TODAY?



1. Consider the power of God that brought Jesus out of the tomb.

What areas of your life need to be revived and transformed by God's power?

2. Every relationship starts somewhere, then grows with future

decisions. We first say *yes* to God in our heart. We believe in Jesus, confess our sins, and begin to talk about our growing faith. We study our Bible daily, then our devotion blossoms into a public commitment. What commitments have you already made, and what decision is God prompting you to make today?

3. What questions do you need to study further to understand what God teaches us in the Bible?

4. Do you want to study to be baptized and join a church family?

3ABN's Pastoral Department (618-627-4651) would be happy to connect you with a local Seventh-day Adventist pastor or elder who can help you prepare to be baptized.

5. Bible lessons like these introduce the truths that invite us to choose to be baptized.

Who do you know that would love to hear what you have learned in these lessons? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes ..." (Romans 1:16).

Additional Notes:

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS FOR ME IN THE PRIVILEGE OF BAPTISM?



1. Angels in Heaven rejoice every time someone repents of their sins. "... there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7 NIV).

2. The deep significance of baptism is so simple that anyone can grasp its meaning. "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:5–6).

3. Baptism is a memorable event that leaves an impression on us and is not easily forgotten. "Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me" (Psalm 66:16 NIV).

4. When we make mistakes, remembering our baptism is an invitation from God to return to Him. "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent" (Revelation 2:4–5).

5. No matter who we are, we are all baptized the same way. No person is above any other. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4–6).

6. The Christian life is based on Jesus' goodness, not our own. "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).

7. Your life with God begins exactly where you are right now, not when you can make yourself a little better. "For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and

in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2 NIV).

8. God has a wonderful assurance for us when we accept His power over sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

LESSON SUMMARY

1. Jesus demonstrated God's love and power by dying for our sins and rising from the dead.

2. God gives us the privilege of declaring our faith in Jesus' victory over sin by being baptized.

3. Baptism by immersion is a symbol of Jesus' death, burial, and victorious resurrection.

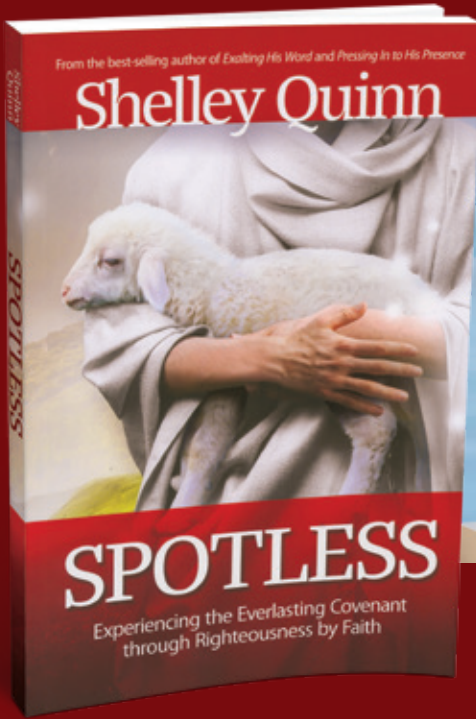
4. Believing in Jesus and learning from the Word of God come before we are baptized, and they continue in the Christian life.

5. Repentance and confession also come before baptism and continue as God helps us to leave our old habits of sin behind.

6. Baptism is a public beginning of the Christian life, when God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit and unites us in the family of God.

7. Salvation comes through faith in Jesus, and baptism is God's way of celebrating what Jesus has done.

Additional Notes:



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STUDY GUIDE

26