BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership Acts 8:26-38; Acts 16:11-15, 25-34 Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a <u>Unit</u> of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The <u>weekly session</u> "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

- 1. <u>The Gathering Time Leader</u> will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
- **2.** The Bible Study Leader will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
- 3. <u>The Worship Time Leader</u> has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the <u>Worship Time</u> that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

If you have youth who will be using the "Take Ten" materials, make sure that they plan ahead to have props to use in the dramatic interpretation they are to prepare.

These should be very simple – scarves for headpieces or for binding arms and legs; a piece of purple cloth; a large box to use as a chariot or as a jail. Be creative in thinking about possibilities.

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Worship Time Leader:

If you have youth who will be using the "Take Ten" materials, talk with the youth who will be leading about having a dramatic interpretation as a part of the Sharing Time.

Ask someone to be prepared to share about the meaning of his/her baptismal experience.

Music Sources:

"The Bond of Love", CCLI #14459, Otis Skillings, 1991, Lillena Publishing Company "The Family of God", CCLI # 17023, G. & W. Gaither, 1970, William J. Gaither Inc. "Trust and Obey", CCLI #22094, D. B. Towner & Rev. J. H. Sammis, Public Domain. "All the Glory of the Heavens", CCLI #1098041, Michael Forster. Kevin Mayhew Ltd. "Baptism Hymn", CCLI #4727161, David Ward & J. E. Giles, 2005, Reformed Praise. "A Song of Faith", CCLI #4418298, Jayne Robbins, 2004, Fish Out of Water Music. "We Gather Together", CCLI#91678, E. Kremser & T. Baker, Public Domain.

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership

Focal Text

Acts 8:26-38; 16:11-15, 25-34

Background Text

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:14-47; 5:11-14; 8:26-39; 16:11-15, 25-34; Romans 1:7; 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; Colossians 2:12

Main Idea

The only person properly qualified for baptism is one who has heard the gospel, accepted its message, and believed in Christ as Saviour. Only those should be received into church membership who give credible evidence that they have received Christ as Saviour and Lord."

Question to Explore

Why be baptized?

Teaching Aim

To help the class state the meaning of believer's baptism and why it is important

Gathering together:

Begin session with the singing of "**The Bond of Love**" If the hymn is unknown have the two verses read or take a few extra minutes and learn to sing it.

First thoughts:

Why be baptized?

University students often arrive on campus with Christian faith untested. A psychology professor at a large university remarked to a first year psychology class that a faith that had not been tested was no faith. This caused momentary panic on the part of some, who had been baptized quite young in life and had been active in church for as long as they could remember. Some who had been disturbed by the idea of the professor beat a trail to the office of the minister of their campus Christian student group for a good

answer to the professor's statement. He compounded the problem when he told them that he agreed with the professor; as do most pastors. An untested faith is hardly faith at all.

Many university students begin their years of higher education with a naive outlook on life—including the Christian life. They expect that university life will be much like high school, with easy answers to all the big questions. Perhaps they were able to get from their adult leaders at home answers that satisfied the situation, but when they came to the university campus they were in a different world. They soon found out that their religion was considered to be only for the immature--for those who had not faced some of life's more difficult questions.

This was precisely the opinion of an army officer who had the oversight of young men during a war. To be exact, he believed that religion was okay for women at home and persons who had not come up against the hard things in life, but woefully inadequate for men in the army!

Closing the Gathering Time:

The army officer refused to consider that total commitment to God may demand a higher level of bravery than facing a human enemy or even death. But, once a person has given God total control of his or her life, that act of bravery will serve well to enable a person to face every danger in life; including war and death.

Today, we will study the implications that surround a person's decision to tell the world that they will follow Christ's command to be baptized and thereby confirm that their life now belongs to their Saviour and Lord.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the "<u>Teacher Preparation</u>" for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the "<u>Bible Study Plan</u>" for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership

Focal Text

Acts 8:26-38; 16:11-15, 25-34

Background Text

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:14-47; 5:11-14; 8:26-39; 16:11-15, 25-34; Romans 1:7; 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; Colossians 2:12

Main Idea

The only person properly qualified for baptism is one who has heard the gospel, accepted its message, and believed in Christ as Saviour. Only those should be received into church membership who give credible evidence that they have received Christ as Saviour and Lord."

Question to Explore

Why be baptized?

Teaching Aim

To help the class state the meaning of believer's baptism and why it is important

Introduction to your personal study:

We recently rejoiced in our second daughter's baptism. After she stepped into the water, our pastor asked, "Who is your Lord?" Marisa answered, "Jesus Christ is my Lord." Pastor John then replied, "Upon your profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, I baptize you my sister, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

Today we study the scriptural descriptions of baptism. Through these passages we will see the significance of believer's baptism—the baptism of one who has professed personal faith in Jesus as Lord.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study", found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

John Baptizes Jesus

Jesus' last instructions to His followers we now call the "Great Commission." (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus directed His disciples to go and make more disciples. They were to baptize the new disciples and teach them to obey everything Jesus commanded them.

The concept of baptism is introduced in each of the four Gospels: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22 and John 3:22-23. John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching a message of repentance (Mark 1:4). Those who had confessed their sins were baptized (Matthew 3:2-6; Mark 1:5). John said "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire " (Matthew 3:11).

Although John initially protested, Jesus persuaded John to baptize Him to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Immediately following His baptism Jesus went up out of the water. The Holy Spirit of God descended on Him like a dove and a Voice from heaven said, "You are My Son Whom I love; with You I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:21-22). What a wonderful picture of the Trinity!

Jesus chose the Judean countryside where John was baptizing as an outdoor classroom for His disciples (John 3:22). He spent time there teaching them and baptizing (John 3:22,26).

Focusing on the Meaning:

Philip Baptizes Ethiopian Court Official Acts 8:26-38

The account of Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian Court Official shows that baptism is available to all believers, Jew or Gentile. Luke records here the first account of a Gentile believer. Like ripples on a pond, the Word of God spread from the Jews in Israel to Hellenistic Jews and now to the Gentile world. This Court Official had traveled from Ethiopia, where he was in charge of all the queen's treasure, to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27, 28). The Bible sometimes describes such worshippers as "Godfearing (Acts 10:2, 22; 17:17). "God-fearing" refers to a Gentile who acknowledged the one true God and followed Jewish ways but had not converted to Judaism. Because this man was a eunuch, he probably would not have been able to convert. (See Deuteronomy 23:1.)

What a great example of spiritual sensitivity we see in Philip. He had already preached in Samaria when the Holy Spirit led him there (Acts 8:5-8). Now, in obedience to the Holy Spirit's prompting, he ran down the road from Jerusalem to Gaza and heard the Ethiopian reading from Isaiah (Acts 8:28). Again prompted by the Holy Spirit, Philip asked the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading (Acts 8:29-30). The man's response brings to mind the charge from Romans 10:13-15, recalling the importance of teaching the message.

At the official's invitation Philip joined him in the chariot. Beginning with the passage from Isaiah 53:8-9, Philip preached Jesus to him. Clearly God had prepared this man's heart for when he heard the gospel he responded immediately. As they passed a body of water, the Ethiopian exclaimed, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36). He ordered the chariot stopped and they both went down into the water where Philip baptized him (Acts 8:38).

Paul Baptizes Lydia and Her Household Acts 16:11-15

Some have renamed the book of Acts, "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." Luke records here the further work of the Holy Spirit as he guides Paul in his missionary efforts on what has become known as his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-20:6). Like Philip, Paul responded to the Holy Spirit's guidance this time to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:8-10). Luke records the journey using the first person plural pronoun indicating that he experienced this historic journey firsthand, together with Paul, Silas and Timothy (Acts 16:10-17)

These inspired missionaries headed for the city of Philippi, a "Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12). Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi, because the group went outside the city gate to the riverside to find a place of prayer. As expected they discovered a prayer group, mostly consisting of women. One of the worshippers, Lydia, was moved by their testimonies. Luke writes that "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." Acts 16:14. This business woman, originally from Thyatira, now sold purple cloth in Philippi. Not only Lydia, but other members of her household responded fully to the gospel and were baptized. Lydia immediately opened her home to the traveling evangelists and persuaded them to stay with her (Acts 16:15).

Paul and Silas Baptize the Jailer Acts 16:25-34

As so often follows a spiritual "high" Paul and his associates suffered a renewed attack of the evil one. A slave girl whose owners exploited her condition for money followed the missionaries around heckling them for several days. Finally Paul could stand it no more. In the Name of Jesus he commanded the spirit to come out of her. Her owners were furious that their source of money had dried up. They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities. 16:19. After hearing that the two missionaries had been causing an uproar the magistrates ordered them stripped and flogged and thrown

into jail (16:20-23). Then they ordered the jailer to guard the two carefully, so he put them in an inner cell and put their feet in stocks (16:24-25).

Although they had suffered a severe beating and were locked in stocks, or perhaps because of their situation, they spent the night praying and singing. About midnight a violent earthquake shook the jail, opening all the doors and breaking the chains. As soon as the jailer saw the doors he drew his sword to kill himself thinking his prisoners had escaped. Fortunately Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" (16:26-28). The jailer rushed in, fell trembling before Paul and Silas, and asked the profound question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (16:30). Obviously, the jailer had seen in the two missionaries something worth having for himself.

Simply, yet profoundly, they replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved-you and your household." Then they explained the way of Jesus to him and the others in his house (16:31-32). Moved to compassion the jailer bathed their wounds. Then he and all his family were baptized (16:33). Luke records that the jailer was filled with joy because he and all his family had come to believe in God (16:34).

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

A Believing Church

We have looked at professions of faith in this study from three very different individuals. The Ethiopian official was a "God-fearing" worshipper of the one true God and acquainted with His Scripture; yet his physical condition prevented him from converting to Judaism. Lydia, apparently a successful business Gentile woman, was seeking the Lord in prayer and sensitive to His working in her heart. The conscientious Philippian jailer was willing to put his life on the line to minister to God's ambassadors. Each of these believers heard the message of the gospel, accepted its message and believed in Christ Jesus as Saviour prior to being baptized.

The church of Jesus Christ is comprised of those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, all those everywhere who call on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord (1 Corinthians 1:2). Because God is Spirit, (John 4:24), each believer is God's temple with the Spirit of God dwelling within (1 Corinthians 3:16). Baptism becomes for the believer, a picture to the world of dying to oneself, being buried with Christ, and rising to live in a new way of life (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4).

For Personal Reflection:

1. What have I learned from this study?

2. What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

3.	What is one my life?	action I wi	II take this	week to a	pply this Sc	ripture passag	e to

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the <u>Focal Text</u> in their Bibles. Also, share with them the <u>Main Idea</u> to be learned from the Scriptures, and the <u>Questions to be Explored</u> by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 8:26-38; 16:11-15, 25-34

Background Text

Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:14-47; 5:11-14; 8:26-39; 16:11-15, 25-34; Romans 1:7; 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; Colossians 2:12

Main Idea

The only person properly qualified for baptism is one who has heard the gospel, accepted its message, and believed in Christ as Saviour. Only those should be received into church membership who give credible evidence that they have received Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Question to Explore

Why be baptized?

Teaching Aim

To help the class state the meaning of believer's baptism and why it is important

Connect with Life:

Ask: What are some goals in parenting? Allow time for responses.

Tell the group: <u>In a recent discussion one father said his goal is not to raise children but</u> to raise parents—adults who are equipped to parent their own children.

We might consider making our motto the same as a Christian university student group. They claim that the purpose for their organization is "making disciple makers."

As believers we are called to follow Christ, to share His redeeming message with our world and to equip new believers to do the same. Let's explore just what the Bible says about the meaning of believer's baptism and its importance in our Christian walk.

Pray asking God to open your hearts to His Word with eagerness and expectancy for the truths He has for you this day.

Guide the Study:

Share the background information regarding baptism from the "Teacher Preparation" section.

Say: We are introduced to the concept of baptism in each of the four Gospels. John prepared the way for Jesus by preaching a message of repentance. Those who responded were baptized (Matthew 3:2-6).

Ask someone to read the story of Jesus' own baptism from Matthew 3:11-16.

Look for opinions: What was the significance of Jesus' baptism? Allow time for responses. If no one else does so, suggest that this represents Jesus' future death, burial, and resurrection.

Ask someone to describe each member of the Trinity (Godhead) in attendance that day.

Comment: From the earliest days of the church baptism became the recognized way for a new believer to proclaim his or her faith in Jesus.

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 8:26-38.

State: <u>God's word spread like ripples on a pond.</u> Discuss the progress of the Gospel from the disciples to the Gentile world.

Review with the learners Philip's sensitivity and obedience to the Holy Spirit using the material found in your "**Teacher Preparation**" section.

Discuss the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:1 which would have disqualified this Ethiopian official from converting to Judaism.

Explore how your fellowship receives new converts.

Now ask: Would we have allowed this Ethiopian to be baptized immediately upon his confession of faith?

Continue: Was it easier to baptize a man immediately in New Testament days than today? Or not? (Different culture? Different clothing? Other reasons?)

Follow up: <u>Is it ever appropriate to delay baptism for weeks, months or even years?</u> Allow time for responses.

Review how your fellowship handles the profession of faith of very young children and the wisdom of a waiting period in some instances.

Have someone read Acts 16:6-10. Suggest that this book might be accurately named "the Acts of the Holy Spirit."

Say: In this passage the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul through a dream. Note that many who minister to Muslims report how the Holy Spirit often speaks to Muslims in dreams.

Take time to pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to open the eyes of Muslims and other non-believers through the use of dreams, and that the dreamers will seek out Christians to explain the dreams to them.

Have someone read Acts 16:10-17.

Request an answer to this: <u>According to this passage</u>, <u>who accompanied Paul on this journey?</u> Point out the use of "we" indicating that Luke traveled on the journey as well.

Discuss how God was already preparing Lydia's heart for His word.

Ask: What is the significance of regular prayer time for believers and seekers? Reflect that it was God who opened her heart.

Say: God calls us to obedience in sharing the Gospel. We do our part. It is God's responsibility to open hearts.

Request a volunteer to read Acts 16:25-34.

Comment: Believers experience a renewed attack of persecution following a spiritual "high."

Ask for volunteers to share a similar experience. Ask how our church can help lessen the impact of spiritual attacks on new believers.

Changing the subject a bit, discuss how people often exploit the sufferings of others for their financial gain. Ask for examples in our society.

Discuss Paul and Silas' ability to praise God in the midst of suffering.

Have someone read or quote Romans 8:28.

Reflect on the importance of the spiritual leadership of the jailer in his family.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the <u>Youth!!! Take Ten</u> page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Briefly share the information from the "**Teacher Preparation**" section found in the part titled "A Believing Church." You can simply read it if you prefer.

Discuss the importance of setting spiritual goals for ourselves and our children.

Ask for suggestions of four or five spiritual goals each member can work toward this year.

Pray, thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, of baptism and the local church.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership Acts 8:26-38; Acts 16:11-15, 25-34

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

The three Biblical stories today are all interesting and full of drama. Choose one and prepare a brief dramatic illustration to present in the sharing time.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership Acts 8:26-38; Acts 16:11-15, 25-34

Beginning the Service:

Make the transition to the worship hour/sermon by singing "We Gather Together".

If the youth have a dramatic interpretation, use it at this time.

Offering:

Praying for the World:

Northwest Mexico City is seeing new House Churches develop, home Bible studies begin and people come to a personal relationship in Jesus Christ. Yet in this major city of 28-30 million people, there is so much more to do. Pray that believers will share their faith by word and action.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Babies Need a Family

Introduction:

Every human infant is born into a family. That family, in normal situations, provides the food and clothing, emotional support and encouragement as it grows toward maturity. Hillary Clinton was confident that "It Takes a Village" to raise a child—meaning that ©2001-2009, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com

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Believer's Baptism and Church Membership – 05-14-04-en

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everyone in the life of a child has responsibilities toward the welfare of that child. So with a person who is saved by faith in Jesus Christ; there is a new birth and a new family. The family in this case is the church.

Someone has said that you cannot be human alone. It is also true that you cannot be Christian alone. A born-again person can only grow and develop into a mature Christian when surrounded by a family of like-minded people who are usually found in a local church. Growth is highly unlikely without this family. Believers do need other believers through whom God works to guide them and to nurture them in the born-again experience.

Believer's Baptism and Church Membership

This topic may raise the question, "Why should I even bother with the church? Why become a church member? A subsequent question could be, "How do I become a church member?" We are looking for the answer in this scripture. I need church membership to enable me to grow up in Christ (Ephesians 4:12 ff). I must not ask for church membership without believer's baptism into Christ. The church is the earthly body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). Since we are baptized into Christ (Roman 6:3), we can make a strong connection between that baptism and joining a church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:18ff).

Another question then follows these two: "When can I be baptized?" The answer is, when you have become a believer in the good news about God as revealed and demonstrated by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Jesus himself said it this way: (Ask a church member to read or quote John 3:16).

So, let's look at the scriptures for further guidance in the matter of believer's baptism and church membership.

1. Baptism is for believers only.

- 1) A man returns home to Ethiopia after he had gone to Jerusalem to worship. Although foreign to Jewish religion, he was a God-fearer, and only a step away from conversion to that religious way of life.
- 2) There was something peculiar about this man. He was an official in the court of Candace, queen of Ethiopia; in charge of all her treasury. He was also a eunuch; a physical condition which disqualified him from converting to Judaism. He was among the first who were not Jews to convert to Christianity. Prior to this event all converts had been Jews with the exception of those in Samaria who were part Jewish by race.
- 3) He was reading from the prophecy of Isaiah but did not understand what he read. It takes more than reading scripture to become a believer. It must be understood as well. Paul emphasizes this point in his first letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 14).

- 4) Philip used a scripture (Isaiah 53:7-8) that spoke about the suffering servant of the Lord to tell the man the gospel. It may be claimed that he was one step closer to God than other non-believers.
- 5) The man heard the gospel and then and there decided to place his life in the hands of Jesus. So he requested Philip to baptize him. Some manuscripts of the New Testament record that Philip stated the requirement of baptism: "If you believe with all your heart you may" (be baptized).

The writer of our Sharing Time today tells the following personal story about his own relationship to God and how that affected his decision to be baptized and join a church:

"During the second world war, I had a spiritual experience with God and understood it to be a remarkable turning point in my life. I had already experienced God's gift of salvation several years before, but had not grown in the grace of God. So I talked to a chaplain, and he baptized me in the Pacific Ocean. I asked a church in Clovis, New Mexico in the USA where my mother was a member to accept my baptism as qualifying me to become a member of their church. So, I joined that church. However, they could not offer me much nurturing, that is, spiritual guidance. How could it with thousands of miles between us. When I returned home after the war, I moved my membership to a church near where my mother had taken residence. It was there that I was nurtured by the church toward spiritual maturity. That church helped me understand and accept God's call to me into full time ministry."

6) It is interesting that no church is mentioned into which he was baptized, thereby becoming a member. The same must be observed about the conversion of the Philippian jailer and the business woman, Lydia, also identified as a worshiper of God, as was the eunuch. She became a believer before she was baptized, as the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

If we were to take time to also look at the conversion experiences of Lydia and others whose stories are told in the New Testament, we would find that all of them shared another important act in common. All these new believers joined a group who had become believers and were baptized. We assume that the Ethiopian became the first member of a new congregation (a church) in his home country. Lydia became the first convert in Philippi, and she and others may have welcomed the jailer and his family into the church established in Philippi, the church to which Paul addressed an Epistle some time later.

Everyone who receives baptism following conversion needs to seek out a group of likeminded people, and they together become a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Call to Commitment:

A baby must have a family to enable it to survive and grow. Every baptized believer needs a church. Each of us knows the importance of belonging to a fellowship of

Christian believers. We must not think of baptism and church membership as an embarrassment or even an inconvenience. Instead, we should recognize that these two acts are the key to our own spiritual survival as well as the means to successfully share the gospel with our community. Christ does not ask us to do things that are not important. His command to us to follow Him in baptism and to join with other baptized believers as a church has huge implications for the spread of the Gospel and for our own spiritual growth, health, and protection. We must take these acts seriously.

Concluding the Service:

Ask members of the group to share stories of their own baptism experience and its meaning to him or her. Some may also share other times when a baptismal experience deeply touched him or her.

Be sensitive to the need of some to ask further questions about baptism in order to clarify decisions they have made or are making.

Close the Sharing Time by singing one of the songs already sung or another one from the list under Music Sources.