



Do you remember what it was like when you came to the decision to get baptized? Were you looking forward to this new experience and did you want the baptism to take place as soon as possible? In this lesson, I look at baptism somewhat from the perspective of the new George, who has just believed. (Practical instructions for the baptizer are in another lesson.) Once I brought a friend who accepted Jesus to the leaders of the church and asked them to baptize him. (That's how it used to be done back then!) I imagined they would listen to George's story with interest. Instead of listening, I had the impression of a job interview. The complexity of the system fell like a cold disbelief upon me.

For some of those interviewers, it was an expression of their responsibility! They heard stories of how someone was baptized and soon „nothing came of him“. I understand that we have to learn from bad experiences, but the projection of the old stories onto my new George seemed quite unfair to me! I had the impression like we would first train a newly born child for a number of weeks, what it means to be part of our family, then we would test him or her by a commission and if the answers were correct, we would ask a vow that he/she would behave properly in our family and represent us well also out there.

Instead, let us look at the practice of the early church. In the book of Acts we see numerous references to someone being baptized. There are links at the very bottom below the video. Please prayerfully read them all again. Among other things, you may notice that all the baptisms there took place within hours after conversion of the given person - or the whole group! (Perhaps, with the exception of Saul of Tarsus, where it was three days. Acts 9:9) In our practice, we do not insist on immediacy. However, inspired by the Word of God, we are looking for options of baptism as soon as possible. The question about the relationship with Jesus before the actual immersion makes sense. However, I do not see baptism in the New Testament as a test of knowledge, nor as a test of faithfulness, if the applicant can wait for many months before someone recognizes him suitable for baptism.

In areas of today's world where massive Jesus movements are spreading, more experienced disciples want a clear confession of Jesus as Savior and Lord (as exemplified by Philip's question to the Ethiopian). And if his confession is clear, they simply baptize him. If something is missing, he will calmly explain it to him from God's Word. The aim of this explanation is to develop and strengthen his nascent faith. With prayer, they assume that

„something will come of him“, and then they help the baptized disciple in his further growth in the long term.

Among other things, they take the baptism of a new believer there as part of his spiritual protection! As if baptism was a „mark“ to the spiritual powers that this person belongs to Jesus already and that the dark forces have no right over him! Biblically, one could debate whether baptism causes this, but our experience clearly says that new people from the „outside“ tend to be subjected to special spiritual attacks! And the clear expression of devotion to Jesus in baptism tends to be of some help to them! Remember the tool called BOSS and the coin for the new believer? In the Funnel, recall how we serve a friend who has just invited the Lord Jesus into his life. In the end, we kindly ask him there:

- *Do you want to (1) follow Jesus for the rest of your life*
- *and (2) talk about Him with other people?*

If he makes it clear that he does, we continue: *Then accept this coin to remind you of your decision for Jesus:*

- *1. to follow Him*
- *and 2. to share Him with others.*

When he accepts the coin and we perceive internally before the Lord that it is sincere, we immediately continue something like this:

In the Bible, people let themselves to be immersed in water after their decision for Jesus. By that they expressed that they wanted to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives.

How are we doing today?!

- *We will enter the water somewhere.*
- *I will ask you: do you want to follow Jesus for the rest of your life?*
- *You say out loud: Yes! – That’s what you decided a while ago when I was giving you the coin.*
- *Then I will say: Therefore I baptize you in the name of God the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Bible calls this immersion „baptism“.*
- *You bend your knees a little, let yourself be completely submerged in the water, and I’ll bring you up again. Here we go? Where is any water here?*
- *And who of your friends can we take to be there, too?*



If necessary, we read some passages from the Word and answer any George's questions as simply as possible...

Thank you, Jesus, for clear biblical examples of how the first generations of your followers did it...

Baptisms in the book of Acts

1. Three thousand people at Pentecost, Acts 2:37-42
2. Samaritans, Acts 8,4-12
3. Simon, Acts 8,13
4. The Ethiopian, Acts 8:26-40
5. Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9,10-22 / Acts 22,12-21
6. Cornelius and his household and friends, Acts 10,33-48
7. Lydia and her household, Acts 16,13-15
8. The jailer and his household, Acts 16:27-34
9. Crispus and the Corinthians, Acts 18.8
10. Twelve disciples of John the Baptist, Acts 19,1-7