

Power for Daily Living

Session 4: Family Reunion

Introduction

In Baptism, the “I” becomes “we.” We are baptized into a group, a Christian community, called a congregation. When we were born physically, God saw fit to put us into families. That’s His plan. It’s the way He sees that we don’t starve. In the family, we are nurtured, cared for, and guided to maturity.

When we were reborn in Baptism, we entered another family, the Church. It’s called a lot of things in the Bible: the Body of Christ, branches, sheep, the temple of living stones, the priesthood of all believers, and the Bride of Christ.

1. Many people today think of the Church primarily as an organization or a building. Consequently, they talk about the Church as something you go to or something that you join—after you shop around. Read over the biblical images of the Church listed above. What does each say about the Church? What characteristic does each emphasize? Which, do you think, is most important? Why?

Into the Word

Becoming His Family

2. Read Titus 3:3–11. This is a “before and after” testimony centering on the miracle of Baptism.
 - a. What are people like before they are God’s people (see especially v. 3)? What evidence for such a description do you see in people around you?
 - b. Who initiates the action? Why can Baptism rightly be called an act of God (see vv. 4–7)?
 - c. Notice that in verse 7 the idea of “heirs” or “inheritors” is used. When people are baptized, they become heirs of God’s promises, His riches. They are family. In verse 8, what does the Bible say family members should do? What should family members avoid (v. 9)? How do you see those characteristics in the members of your family? in you?

Now a Child

3. In Baptism, people become the children of God. As God’s children, they receive the Holy Spirit and become heirs to what God has promised in Jesus Christ. See Galatians 4:1–7. What are the main differences between being a slave and being a child? How does that difference affect you?
4. In the previous section (Galatians 3:26–29) the connection is made between Baptism and being children of God. What does that connection mean for your life? How is that connection evident in you?

A Special Saving

5. In 1 Peter 3:18–22, the Church is compared to Noah’s ark, and the flood is compared to Baptism. What saving took place in the ark? How is that saving similar to what happens in Baptism?
6. Read 1 Peter 3:18–22. Notice the connection in verse 21 between Baptism and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 22 and see the promise of power through Jesus Christ. What does that power mean for you? for your congregation? Talk about it. What evidence of that power do you see? How might that power be more evident?

His Bride/Body

7. Read Ephesians 5:25–30. Here the Church is called the Bride of Christ. What does that image mean for the Church? How is that an important concept in understanding the love of Jesus for His people?
8. This section calls the Church the Body of Christ. What does it mean to you to say that you are part of the Body of Christ? What should it mean to your congregation? How will both you and the congregation show that you are part of His Body?
9. What plan can you come up with that will help people in your congregation understand what it means to be loved by Christ as His Bride and to be related so closely to Him that we are a part of His Body? How might your congregation be stronger if those truths were clearer?

The Body at Work

Ephesians 4:1–6 shows us how this family or Body really works. Notice how this text relates to the custom of having sponsors at a Baptism. Sponsors simply reflect, in an intensified and direct way, the care and concern of the entire Body.

10. Perhaps you are a sponsor. As a group, list some of the duties of a sponsor. How important are these duties? How are they representative of the whole congregation?
11. In the Baptism ceremony, the sponsor is asked to pray for and encourage the child. Look over your list of duties. Now make a list of qualifications for a sponsor. What kind of people should be chosen as sponsors? What part would their faith, their love for the Lord, their part in the Body play in those qualifications? Talk about it. Why should sponsors be chosen carefully?

Unity in Diversity

12. In Ephesians 4:7, a strange paradox is revealed. The unity of the Body of Christ is reflected in the diversity of gifts given to Christians by the Spirit. Using the unique gifts the Spirit has given you is one of the key ways in which you live your Baptism in daily life. Talk about it. How is the Holy Spirit involved in your life through the gifts and talents He has given you?

13. Read 1 Peter 4:10. What instruction for the use of our gifts do you find there? What does that instruction mean for you as you go about serving others in the Body?

Spiritual Gifts

14. Read about spiritual gifts in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; and 1 Peter 4:10. What do the texts say to you about your spiritual gifts? How does the Spirit make it possible for you to serve?

15. Just as our bodies have different parts, God has given different members of Christ's Body different gifts. He wants every part of the Body to function for the sake of the rest. That kind of service is what it means to live our Baptism. Through Baptism, the Spirit gives gifts so that the Body of Christ can function in the world today. What plan can you come up with to allow each person in your congregation to use his or her gifts more effectively? How can more of them be included in service to others and in ministry to the Body?

Priesthood for All

16. Another way the New Testament talks about everyone being involved in the ministry is the "priesthood of all believers." Read 1 Peter 2:2–10 and Revelation 5:9–10. Summarize the passages. What do they mean to you?

17. While the Office of the Ministry (pastoral office) is certainly important in the Church, the New Testament also emphasizes everyone's call to serve others. The New Testament sees each Christian as a servant. What does it mean to you to know that you are a servant in the Body—one who reaches out with the Good News to others and offers the love and grace of God in what you do and say?

- a. What does that truth say about the service of each person in the Body?
- b. Why is each important? How can each be made to feel important?

Conclusion

18. Look at Ephesians 4:14–16. This is the result of living your Baptism, functioning as a part of the Body of Christ.

- a. What is the danger of remaining spiritual babies and refusing to move forward in discipleship (v. 14)?
- b. What is the challenge (v. 15)?
- c. What is the result (v. 16)?

- d. Why does the Church exist? For what purposes are people who are baptized brought together? Make a list of the things the people of God are called upon, challenged, and empowered to do.

19. Living our Baptism implies loving others, caring for them, witnessing, praying, and serving through spiritual gifts. By focusing on our Baptism as a lifestyle—along with millions of other Christians—we can turn the world upside down for Jesus Christ. List ways in which you can multiply this attitude of living service in your congregation. How can you make your plans happen? Who will help?

In Closing

Prayer: O Lord, gracious Trinity, in my Baptism You regenerated me to be Your child. I now repeat my vow that I will renounce the devil and all his works and all his pomp, and will remain true to You unto death. To this end grant me the power of Your Holy Spirit, O Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, my Savior, and finally give me the crown of life which You have graciously promised me. Amen. (C. M. Zorn, 1846–1928)

Close by singing or reading in unison “Take My Life and Let It Be,” stanzas 1–4 (*LSB* 783; *ELH* 444; *CW* 469; *LW* 404; *LBW* 406; *TLH* 400).

1. Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2. Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

3. Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

4. Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.