

Prepare

What's behind all this?

"Baptism" literally means "washing," and it was a common ritual in Jesus' day. In fact, some Jews would ritually wash themselves half a dozen times per day, before every meal and every prayer time, to spiritually cleanse themselves.

When Jesus' cousin John began baptizing people in the Jordan River, people would have seen it in this context—John was baptizing people after they repented of their sins. But when Jesus showed up to be baptized, even John was taken aback.

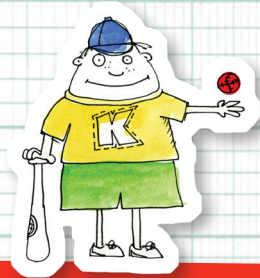
The dove (a symbol of God's Spirit) and the voice of God at Jesus' baptism invoke an anointing of Jesus and inaugurate the beginning of his ministry. And Jesus' submission to baptism by John set an example that Christians have followed ever since.

Where are kids at?

- Kids this age will probably still think of baptism in a very concrete way. Water was poured on their heads. Words were said. Help lead them in connecting their baptism to the story of Jesus' baptism. Encourage them to think about how baptism is more than just water and words. Baptism connects us with the Holy Spirit and we are changed.



Mark 1:9-11
Acts 19:4-5
Ephesians 4:4-6



Where's this going?

Kids explore what Jesus' baptism reveals about him and how that shapes Christians' identities and lives.

Consider this . . .

"It was a sublime moment in his [Jesus'] life. For as he came up out of the water, serene in the consciousness that he was doing his utmost to carry out the will of God, a tremendous sense of vocation, selection and mission came over him. He heard a voice saying to him, 'You are my son, my beloved! You are my chosen!'"

Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A Life of Jesus*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, publishers), 1950, 42

encounter

15 minutes

Video

1. Set up

Have kids in your group share the stories of their baptism. Where were they baptized? How old were they? Who was there? What happened? Are there any special stories that make their baptism unique in their family? Allow time for kids to think about these questions and share their stories with the group. Ask if kids realized that Jesus was baptized.

2. Watch

“Why did Jesus get baptized?” DVD 2 Chapter 5

3. Unpack

- According to the video, what possible reasons was Jesus baptized?
- What about your baptism and Jesus’ baptism is the same? What about them is different?
- What impact might Jesus’ baptism have had on those who saw, heard, and experienced it?

What about the Bible?

Write these verses on chart paper: Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34. Have kids race to the verses listed. Whoever finds a passage first can choose another volunteer to read it. On another piece of chart paper, list similarities and differences between these four Gospel accounts of Jesus’ baptism.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- What happens in each of these accounts?
- What’s unique about each of these accounts?
- What does being baptized mean to you?
- What are some of your experiences with other baptisms? How do they make you feel?

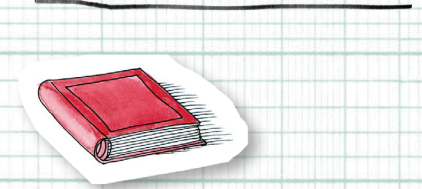
Make sure you’ve got the obvious stuff for this session—re:form video (DVD or download), Anti-Workbooks, Bibles, pens or pencils, paper, tape, etc.



Back it up . . .

“Baptism was just what folks did all the time. It helped clean them on the outside and it was symbolic of getting clean on the inside.”

re:form DVD



bap-tism

[bap-tizm]

a ritual that welcomes people into the Christian community and equips them to live their lives within that community



Get this stuff . . .

Chart paper. Marker.

engage

25-30 minutes

Choose 1+ Anti-Workbook (AW) activities to explore the session question. The first 2 are for individual use, while the last 2 involve the whole group.



1. Spirit Photo Shoot AW p. 114

As a group, list all the words or images for Holy Spirit and baptism that you have heard or seen. Using Legos®, create a Holy Spirit shape. What shape did you create and why? Encourage kids to use their Holy Spirit shape during their photo shoot.

Allow some time for kids to really explore your meeting space, building, and if possible, the surrounding neighborhood. Consider trekking offsite to a park, mall, or downtown city block to give kids the opportunity to stretch their imaginations in this activity. There are many things and places that can remind us of the Holy Spirit and Jesus' baptism!

Questions for conversation while you work:

- What was your first idea for a photo? Why did that come to mind first?
- Where are your photos located? In a church? Outside? In a mall?
- How do you think the people who experienced Jesus' baptism shared their story?

Get this stuff . . .

Digital cameras. Photo printer. Stapler. Legos®.

Where's this going?

Kids imagine where they might find the Spirit, and take photos of those locations in order to focus on the role of the Spirit in Jesus' baptism.

Back it up . . .

"But for Jesus, maybe it wasn't so much about the cleansing off of the old as it was the getting ready for the new. He was starting something big that would need some heavy-duty blessing."

re:form DVD



2. How Many Ways? AW p. 115

Pass out scraps of paper to kids. Have kids think of all the ways that people in Bible times used water and write one use on a piece of paper. When finished, kids should float their paper scrap in the bowl of water. Then have kids think of the modern ways of using water, write one on a piece of paper, and float those in the bowl. How has our use of water changed over the years of human life? What does this mean for our future?

Questions for conversation while you work:

- Which items did you choose and why?
- Of the alternative uses you have devised, which is your favorite? Which is most useful? Which is the wackiest?
- How might people have reacted to baptism as a brand-new, unexpected use for water?

Get this stuff . . .

Large bowl of water. Scraps of paper.

Where's this going?

Kids gather items and consider a variety of innovative ways to use each common item, and then apply this exploration to the many ways water was used in Bible times.



3. Wet Tag! AW p. 116

Have kids work together to write two sets of rules for the water tag game, making one set very strict and controlling, using the rules in the Anti-Workbook. The other set of rules should emulate the rules (or lack of rules) you might have in a neighborhood water tag game. Which game sounds more fun? As you work your way through the activity, try putting these two sets of rules to work.

Questions for conversation while you work:

- Which game was more fun—the one with lots of rules or the one with fewer rules? Why?
- What can we learn from rules? What can we learn from freestyle games? How do these ideas relate to how we look at the use of water in baptism?
- What kinds of requirements do you think come with baptism?
- Why do you think John used water for baptism?
- Why is water so valuable to humans?
- If water is just a symbol in our baptism, what do you think actually baptizes us?

Get this stuff . . .

Squirt bottles.

Where's this going?

By staging a game of water tag, kids will connect the ancient uses of water for purifying and cleansing people to the new ways that John taught in the Bible.



4. Picto-baptism-ary AW p. 117

Think about your baptism. What are the most important ways you live out your baptismal call? If you are a parent of a baptized child, what do you feel you need to do for your child now that he or she is baptized? Create a “promise note” to recite to your group, using informal jargon. For example:

“Because I was baptized, I’ll always be sure to hug my children every day, help those who need it, etc.”

Questions for conversation while you work:

- If you think of baptism as a command (Ready. Set. Go!), what happens after “go”? What needs to be done now that someone is baptized?
- What are a few things Jesus did after being baptized? What are some things that you have done after being baptized that are similar?
- What do you think it means that baptism is a new beginning?
- If you could choose whether to be baptized or not today, which would you choose and why?
- How is living out our baptismal call different than the checklist I recited before this activity?

Where's this going?

By playing a picture-guessing game of Jesus’ work in the world, kids explore ways that they can emulate Jesus by living out their baptismal call.

Ho·ly Spir·it [ho-lee speer-it]

One member of the Trinity who works through us in many ways, the giver of gifts and the cultivator of fruits (of the Spirit)

respond

15-20 minutes

Gather to share the different points of view kids have discovered and developed during the session.

Regroup

Have kids think way, way, way into the future and imagine they are parents bringing their children to be baptized. Have each kid draw a picture or write a story about that day. Allow time for kids to share with the group.

Share

Invite kids to share their work and describe how and why they did it. Affirm those things you appreciate or find interesting and ask others to offer helpful observations.

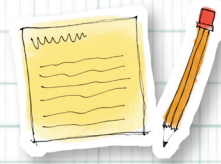
Questions for conversation:

- If you think back to the video, what reasons were given by the video for baptizing someone?
- What reasons would you give for baptizing your own child?
- If being baptized created a physical feeling within us, what do you think it would feel like?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to be baptized?
- How can we live out our baptismal call in a way that emulates Jesus?

Send

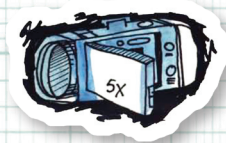
If you haven't already, place a clear vase in the center of a table, and make sure you have enough small clear containers for each kid to have one. For each lesson in the Jesus unit, you will continue to add new sand to the vase.

Fill a third of your small containers with red sand to represent the Holy Spirit fire. Fill another third of your small containers with orange sand to represent the Holy Spirit fire. Fill the final third of your containers with blue sand to represent the water of baptism. Go around the table and give each kid a chance to finish this prayer sentence as they pour their sand into the large vase: "Dear God, Because I have been baptized, I . . ." Finish the prayer with a group "Amen."



Get this stuff . . .

Blank paper. Clear vase with straight sides. Small clear containers. Red, orange, and blue sand.



Capture it . . .

Use a digital camera, camcorder, scanner, web cam, or audio recorder to capture group conversations and individual pieces of work. Upload them to your online galleries, or ask kids to do so.