



## **Theme: 3 Powerful Gifts**

### **"Baptism"**



You also can get these Meditation Moments each day directly on your phone. Just text "**med moments**" to **970-426-0700** to receive the **daily Meditation Moment** each morning and start your day grounded in faith and peace.

### **Weekly Memory Verse:**

***<sup>12</sup> For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. –Colossians 2:12***

### **Meditation Moments for Monday, September 29 – Read Psalm 51:2-7 and Isaiah 4:3-6.**

When John the Baptist, and then Jesus' followers, baptized people, there is no record of anyone asking, "What do they think they are doing?" Jewish and non-Jewish followers of John or Jesus who participated in baptism would not have found this practice unfamiliar. Water is the element naturally used for cleansing the body. Its symbolic use was found in almost every religious practice; this included the Judaism in which Jesus grew up and was trained in.



Baptism recognizes symbolically that God made you to love you and you belong to God. God loves you just as you are and loves you too much to leave you as you are. It's critical we don't pretend we are seeking forgiveness if we are not serious. The kind of half-hearted apologies we sometimes offer won't work when it comes to being honest with God. What did Psalm 51 show about the quality of whole-hearted repentance? When have you been able to talk to God in that forthright, unqualified tone?





Isaiah 4's words followed a searing indictment of the arrogant wealthy men and women of Israel in Isaiah 3:14-17 and 24-26. Even judgment might serve as a cleansing baptism. David McKenna notes in *The Preacher's Commentary Series*, "God is faithful...through the 'spirit of judgment' and the 'spirit of burning,' Isaiah

foresees the washing of the people of Zion... so that the people and their city can fulfill their God-given purpose." Have the painful results of doing wrong ever moved you to turn to God for cleansing and a fresh start?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, help me clearly see the times when I am wrong, and to face them honestly. Thank you for offering me your cleansing grace and life transformation at those times. Amen.*


**Tuesday, September 30** – Read **Luke 3:4-8**. Nearly four hundred years had gone by with no clear prophetic voice in Israel, and many Israelites were spiritually hungry. When John the Baptizer (or Baptist) began preaching, forcefully and urgently calling people to change their lives, he drew crowds hungry for a word from God. He baptized people as a symbol of cleansing and change. He warned those crowds that claiming to be Abraham's descendants was worthless if their lives dishonored Abraham's spiritual legacy.

 John the Baptist had a very clear sense of mission: to lead people to repent and accept God's forgiveness of sins and show it through the sign of baptism (verse 3). His passionate call for people to change and accept baptism was full of urgency. To what extent do you feel a sense of urgency in pursuing God's path for your life? What steps help you keep your commitment to God's call strong and focused?

 Before John, Israelites baptized Gentile converts but did not see any need to accept baptism for themselves. John's call to baptism for those who had been born as Jews was unprecedented. He insisted that one's family of origin was not adequate to guarantee one's relationship with God. Have you ever hoped that a family tradition of faith, or a denominational identity, would be enough to secure your standing with God? What makes personal baptism an important step? For more information on Baptism, you can check out [www.summitdurango.org/baptism](http://www.summitdurango.org/baptism). We will have an opportunity for Baptism in our Sanctuary on November 8 and 9 for those wanting to take that step.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, help me to clearly see your call on my life. Give me the courage and conviction of John the Baptist while living out that calling and doing your will. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 1** – Read **Matthew 3:13-17**. John had been preaching in Matthew 3:11, "The one who is coming after me is stronger than I am. I'm not worthy of carrying his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Then Jesus appeared. Instead of saying, "Stand aside, John—the main act is here with strength and fire," Jesus joined the line of people waiting for baptism. In his commentary *Matthew for Everyone*, N.T. Write notes, "John, of course, is horrified.... Surely if anything he, John, needs to be baptized by Jesus himself?" What can we learn from these four verses?

 There was a practical reason for baptizing Jesus we read about in Matthew 16:18. In **his** church, baptism wasn't only for "outsiders," often called Gentiles, but for all his followers. Why let anyone say, "Why should I be baptized? Jesus

wasn't." The baptism of Jesus identifies Jesus as the messianic servant who stands in solidarity with his people. Matthew 3:15 tells us that as their representative he came "to fulfill all righteousness." How did Jesus' example add depth to every baptism?



There was more. Jesus came to relaunch God's kingship, including God's judgment on evil and the rescue of God's people. But Jesus' way was, as N.T. Wright puts it, "by humbly identifying himself with God's people, by taking their place, sharing their penitence, living their life and ultimately dying their death.... The dove... showed that the coming judgment will not be achieved through a warlike or vindictive spirit but will mean the making of peace." How did Jesus in the river show how differently God's power works?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, your world-changing impact came about, not by bullying or intimidating people, but by humbly exercising God's love among us. Keep teaching me what it means to live out your power. Amen.*

**Thursday, October 2** – Read **Matthew 28:16-20**. Jesus' resurrection was not the end of his story. It launched a new chapter in establishing his eternal kingdom. As people who believe Jesus is alive, we don't just sit idly and watch God search for others. Jesus' "marching orders" to his followers were that we be his witnesses, making disciples, baptizing and teaching, active partners in God's work of calling humans back to God. God would empower them for their mission. It's still our mission, and Jesus promised to be with us every day.



In what ways does believing that Jesus rose from the dead change your heart and life? How does the resurrection make Jesus' claim to have the divine authority to forgive your sins credible for you? In what ways are you gifted to help carry out Jesus' directive? How does Jesus' command to live out his mission shape your understanding of what it means for Summit to be "the church"?



Jesus said, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth." In the first century, that meant that not even the mighty Roman Empire could block him from being with his followers. And no power on earth today has the authority to make Jesus abandon you. How can trusting Jesus is with you give you courage, strength and peace for all of life's challenges?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you and I need to work out the details together. But the big mission of my life with you is clear: I am, in whatever ways I fit best, to lead others to serve you as baptized disciples. Guide me to the way(s) you want me to join in that mission. Amen.*

**Friday, October 3** – Read **Acts 2:38-41, 10:45-48, 16:33, and 22:14-16**. Jesus commissioned his followers to "make disciples, baptizing them" in yesterday's reading from Matthew 28:16-20. The book of Acts is full of stories of how seriously they took that commission. Today's readings are only four examples of many. Baptism developed from only a personal act into an expression of identity with the church, the body of God's people. Baptism in the first century church was an obvious way of becoming

part of God's family, the church. It also had meaning for being made clean and new in Acts 2:38.



Some Christian groups seem to treat baptism as a hurdle to clear, a kind of final exam to see if a person is worthy to join the church. The stories in Acts do not sound that way. 3000 people were baptized in Acts 2. Don't you wish Luke had explained how the apostles baptized that many people? Whole households were baptized in Acts 10 and 16. The apostle Paul recalls Ananias asking him, "What are you waiting for?" Do you see baptism as God's gift of grace to you, or as something you accomplish?



Acts 9:10-18 tells the story of Ananias bravely going to a man who had come to town to imprison and maybe kill him. When on trial, in Acts 22, Paul remembered that Ananias was eager to get him baptized, despite his track record of violently opposing Christians. Has God ever called you to do something good that nevertheless scared you and called for some courage? If God called you to an "Ananias" mission today, how easy or hard do you believe it would be for you to respond?

**Prayer:** Lord, if Ananias had said "no," he would have missed the chance to be part of a historically great moment. Help me not to miss your call, or to fail to answer. Amen.

**Saturday, October 4** – Read **Romans 6:1-4, 11** and **Colossians 2:9-12**. In his letter to Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul said baptism identifies each Christian with Jesus' death and his resurrection to new life. In Colossians 2, he wrote to other living people about the same idea: "You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God." A few verses later he returned to that key idea, telling them, "You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" in Colossians 3:4. Yes, baptism is a symbol, but it also points to a profound spiritual reality. The understanding of baptism in terms of dying and rising is based on our relationship to Christ who died and rose from the dead. If you love Jesus but have never been baptized, you can go to [www.summitdurango.org/baptism](http://www.summitdurango.org/baptism) for more info.



Paul saw baptism as much more than a hollow token act. Romans 6:3 tells us those "baptized into Christ" lose their "old self," to find a new identity with Christ we read about in Romans 5:15-21. We may still struggle, but Paul said in Christ we can see ourselves as "dead to sin," as God does. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote of Colossians 2 in *Paul for Everyone*, "Baptism (the mode and sign of entry into the Christian community from the very earliest days to the present) is all about 'putting off' an entire way of life, an entire sphere of existence. It means dying to the old world and coming alive to God's new one... What are the religious and philosophical attractions in your world that are most likely to draw new Christians away from the 'fulfillment' they already have in the king?" In what ways has Christ's gift of grace brought you "alive for God in Christ Jesus"?

**Prayer:** Jesus, to call you "Lord" is not to say, "Thanks for letting me off the hook." It is to say, "I want you, not my broken habits or instincts, to rule my life." Thank you for giving me the promise of a better way to live. Amen.