

SPIRITUAL GROWTH RESOURCES



**MAR 20-27
BAPTISM**

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Spiritual Growth Resources brought to you by the Discipleship & Outreach Ministries of the Carmichael Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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PROLOGUE

The Carmichael SDA Church is providing spiritual growth resources for individuals, couples, families, and small groups as an extension during this pandemic for a church that is scattered like salt and to indeed be salty; to be light and receive another infusion of power. Pick and choose from these resources for your spiritual growth, whether it's during your time of personal devotions or family worship or small group gathering. The 10 options include:

1. Video
2. Bible Dialogue
3. Prayer Experiences
4. Discussion Questions
5. Application Ideas
6. Sharing Options
7. Bible-In-My-Head, Heart, and Hand
8. Sing-Along
9. Inspirational Music
10. Kids of All Ages

BAPTISM

INTRO AND VIDEO



For the month of March, our theme is “New Life.” We started with “Sickness and Death,” including a time during our

worship service to memorialize those from our congregation who have passed away since the beginning of the pandemic. Because we haven't been able to gather for funerals or memorial services, this gave us our first opportunity to do so. The next week we naturally went to the topic of "Hope." We often think of hope being less important than love because of 1 Corinthians 13:13: "There are three things that will endure— faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love." Please note that hope is one of the top three things that endure. Said another way, "Hope is one of the BIG 3."

This week our topic is "Baptism." This uniquely combines death and resurrection. In Old Testament times, baptism symbolized the washing away of impurity. Those born of Israelite parentage became part of God's people by circumcision. Gentiles could become Jews by being circumcised and then baptized (Hebrew *mikvah*). Many religions over the millennia have practiced purification rites like this. John "the Baptist" radicalized this for the Jews by calling for both Jews and Gentiles to be baptized. Imagine being a Jew—part of God's people all your life, and now you hear that you also need to be baptized just like those filthy Gentiles. I'm offended just hearing it! The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance, for both Gentiles and Jews (Luke 3:3; Acts 19:4).

Then the disciples of Jesus starting baptizing people (John 4:1-2). Next thing you know, Jesus himself asked John to baptize him (Matthew 3:13-17). That's when things really got out of hand—God the Father spoke out loud from heaven to earth of how pleased he was with his Beloved Son.

At the end of his ministry, Jesus gave his disciples the Gospel Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This includes baptizing those who choose to follow Jesus as his disciples. Just a few weeks later, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter called for people to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Then he promised two results: 1) Their sins would be forgiven; and 2) They would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (whatever that was!).

Because baptism is a symbol, it can have more than one meaning. It can symbolize purification, like washing away sins. It can also symbolize a new birth. Just as our first (physical) birth came out of our mother's womb enclosed with water (amniotic fluid), our second (spiritual) birth comes out of the water of baptism. It was Paul who later explained baptism as death, burial, and resurrection—all symbolized by the sacrament of baptism (Romans 6:4). But baptism can also be like a rite of passage for someone who grows up as a Christian—sort of like a Christian *bar mitzvah* or *bat mitzvah*—coming of age.

What does baptism mean to you? Has that changed?

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BIBLE DIALOGUE

Instead of the brief passages about baptism in the Gospels, for our “Bible Dialogue” this week we’ll turn to Paul’s description of baptism symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ found in the first part of Romans 6.

STUDY

BAPTIZED FROM DEATH TO LIFE

What thoughts come to your mind when you watch a baptism?

READ ROMANS 6:1-14.

1. When were you baptized?
 - A.I can't remember.
 - B.The exact date is etched in my memory.
 - C.When I was a (mark the one): child, adolescent, adult.
 - D.After a series of baptismal classes.
 - E.When my friend(s) got baptized.
 - F.After an evangelist did a series of meetings at my church.
 - G.I haven't been baptized.
 - H.Each time I participate in the foot-washing ceremony.
 - I.Other.
2. Why were you baptized?
 - A.It seemed like the right thing to do.
 - B.I loved Jesus.
 - C.To make a decision for Christ on my own.
 - D.This was my way to die to self.
 - E.Somebody asked me.
 - F.To become a member of the church.
 - G.I don't know.
 - H.So I will be able to go to heaven.
 - I.Other.
3. What does baptism mean?

- A.It's symbolic; it mean different things to different people.
 - B.Washing away the dirt of sin—cleansing.
 - C.Joining Christ by laying down my life—dying with him.
 - D.The start of a brand new life—resurrection.
 - E.A special service at the baptistry.
 - F.You get dunked, hair gets messed up, everyone watches.
 - G.It's a rite of passage for those who grow up in the church.
 - H.It doesn't seem to change things that much.
 - I.Other.
4. How is baptism like death, burial, and resurrection?
- A.Romans 6 uses that terminology.
 - B.It's like drowning.
 - C.Dying to self and all that used to be important to me.
 - D.Leaving the past behind; buried.
 - E.A whole new life, with new purposes and priorities.
 - F.Hard to start a “new life” when you’ve grown up Christian.
 - G.That’s too much for most children to understand.
 - H.Other.
5. What does it mean to be “dead to sin”?
- A.Sin kills.
 - B.Sin no longer controls me.
 - C.I’m no longer tempted.
 - D.I’m no longer a slave to sin.
 - E.I stop sinning.
 - F.Consider me a zombie.
 - G.Crucifying selfishness every day.
 - H.Other.

6. What does it mean to be “raised with Christ”?
 - A.That won’t happen until Christ’s Second Coming.
 - B.That occurs once we die to sin.
 - C.It’s a miracle.
 - D.A new life with a new purpose.
 - E.We belong to Jesus.
 - F.We have access to supernatural power.
 - G.We give glory to God in all we do.
 - H.Other.

7. You’ve changed a lot since your physical birth. What changes have you been through since your spiritual birth?

8. What are examples of things you do to glorify God in your new, resurrected life now? What else could you do?

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PRAYER EXPERIENCES

Prayer Experiences

Hold Your Breath! A person needs to hold their breath when they are submerged during their baptism. But that’s not the only time you hold your breath. Try holding your breath and then pray during that short time. You don’t have to be submerged to do this. Regular breathing involves inhaling and exhaling about every four or five seconds.

Some people can hold their breath for 20-30 seconds, while others can hold it longer—maybe an entire minute. Limit your prayer to whatever you can say during that time. You can also do this more than once. Perhaps you could focus on the three symbols found in baptism (death, burial, and resurrection) and do one hold-your-breath prayer for each.

Spend prayer time in quiet reflection about the time(s) God has given you new life or in some way renewed your life. This may have happened at your baptism, but many people experience multiple re-births during their lifetime. What have been yours? As God brings those to your memory, respond with gratitude and express that to God.

Make a list of people you know have been baptized, starting with family members and friends. Spend one minute praying for each person. You may choose to spread this over several days during your times of prayer, taking several names each time. Thank God for their baptism and what it symbolizes. Ask God to provide the gift of repentance repeatedly, as well as the gift of burying the sinful past, and also renewal again and again.

If your baptism was more than a year ago, ask God about your life now compared to your life then. Just as physical life begins at birth and then changes, your spiritual life may have begun years ago and then changed. Physically our life might be challenged by accident or illness, and then, in a sense, we get a new “lease on life.” The same is true spiritually. Sometimes it seems that our spiritual life withers or comes near to death, either gradually or quickly. And then God provides us with new life. Pray through your

spiritual journey with God. Repent. Bury. Experience God's newness in your spiritual life.

Pray by meditating on this Scripture from Galatians 2:20. The NKJV renders it, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Take each phrase and let it marinate in your thoughts and feelings. If it's difficult to understand, try The Message paraphrase of this passage: "I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not 'mine,' but is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going back on that."

If you have not been baptized, what is the reason? Are you not ready? Is it a choice you want to make later in life? If so, how much later? Why put off what your Creator intended for you because you might have an idea of something you think is better? Has nobody asked you? Have you felt pressured? Did you have a bad experience that makes you not want to make a commitment to Christ or not do it publicly? Do you not want a new life? Spend some time in prayer and make this a matter between you and God before you make it a matter between you and another person.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Select from these questions, or let them prompt your own questions. You can reflect on these by yourself, or discuss them with another person or group of people.

- 1.What does baptism mean to you?
- 2.What did baptism mean to you when you were baptized?
- 3.What have you heard baptism means to others?
- 4.What is a good age to be baptized?
- 5.What is a good point in life to be baptized.
- 6.If you aren't baptized, what is the reason—never been asked? Never desired or saw a need for it? Other?
- 7.Why shouldn't (or should) infants be baptized?
- 8.How often should a person be baptized?
- 9.Why don't Christians get re-baptized more often?
- 10.Does the foot-washing service function as a re-baptism for you? Why or why not?
- 11.What died in you at your baptism? To what did you die?
- 12.What did you bury at your baptism?
- 13.How would you describe your "new life" after your baptism?
- 14.How should a person deal with sin following their baptism?
- 15.What goes through your mind when you see someone being re-re-baptized?

16. Long after you've been baptized, what are good ways to make repentance tangible?
17. Do you need a resurrection now?
18. Would you like to be baptized now?
19. Should a person be baptized even though they might not understand the symbolism?
20. Why is baptism tied to becoming a church member?
Can a person be baptized into Christ without being baptized into the Body of Christ?

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APPLICATION IDEAS

Repent. That was our theme a little more than a month ago. Is there any need for you to repent since then? A daily attitude of repentance seems to be a good posture for followers of Jesus. Repentance precedes baptism. John the Baptist preached this. Peter said the same thing at the climax of his famous sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people did that very thing. Repentance continues after baptism, too. Whether you're baptized or not, one way to apply our topic to your life would be to repent.

Die. This is NOT an invitation to commit suicide. But it is an invitation to die to one's self. Baptism symbolizes our death, just as Jesus died. We join him by giving him all the minutes, days, and years we have left in our lives. By giving this to him, our remaining time on earth is all a gift from him, to live for him in this "new life" he gives us.

Bury. What do you need to release or leave behind at this point in your life? Are you clinging to guilt that you won't let go of no matter what? Do you have regrets that sap your current life because of what might have been? Do you cling to sin or a negative habit that might be a secret to others, but certainly not to God (and probably not some others either). Are you holding a grudge or desire for revenge against someone who wronged you sometime in the past? Have you refused the forgiveness God offers for your own sins of the past, thinking "God may have forgiven me, but I cannot forgive myself." Bury it! Let it go. Let it go to the bottom of the sea. Bury it in baptism so you can rise to new life.

New Life. When you have given all you have and all you are to God, and yet you are still breathing, you are living a "new life." Refer to the Galatians 2:20 passage above in the "Prayer Experiences." In what ways has Jesus given you "new life"? Has it been so long ago that it's no longer "new"? Is it still alive? The Creator God who made this earth and renews it each Spring, can do the same in your life as well. Pray for that. Celebrate it. And share that with others (as recommended in the section below).

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SHARING OPTIONS

Do you have a photo or video of your baptism? Is it just a picture in your mind? Share the picture (or description from your memory) with another person, and

ask for their memories of their baptism. In what way(s) did you “die” with Christ at that time? What did you bury or leave behind? And what has been your new life since that time? You can use a sheet of paper and mark three columns with the first being “What died when you gave your life to Jesus.” The middle column could have at the top “What have you buried, leaving it behind?” And the column on the right would be “What new life has Jesus given you?” Fill this out and share it with another person. While you share, you might add some other elements to it.

When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he invited his listeners to repent and be baptized. The result would be the forgiveness of their sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If you have been baptized, did you also receive the Holy Spirit in your life? The evidence shows with the “fruits of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23) which are Godly character traits the Holy Spirit develops in your life over time. Another evidence is that the Holy Spirit gives “spiritual gifts” which are special abilities or talents to build up the Body of Christ—God’s people. These are ways to serve the way Jesus did when he was on earth. Which gifts has the Holy Spirit given you to bring people to Christ or to help Christians grow in their relationship with Christ? If you are uncertain, ask for the Holy Spirit to fill your life, and then get feedback from God and from others on the changes that are happening. Expect some instantly and some that take time.

The COVID pandemic has certainly changed the lifestyles of even healthy people. While medical personnel can easily be overworked at a time like this, and teachers

have to adapt just about every day, and other professions have been stretched, many people have found they have more time on their hands (and it might be driving them a bit crazy). Take some of this unplanned resource of time and reflect on your baptism (past or future), and the new life that Jesus gives and renews.

Death, Burial, Resurrection

What “died” when you gave your life to Jesus?

What have you “buried,” leaving it behind?

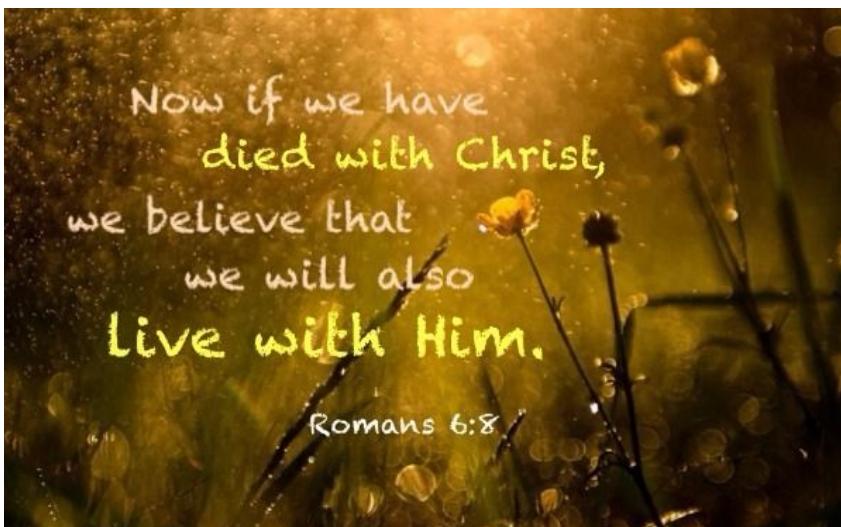
What “new life” has Jesus given you?

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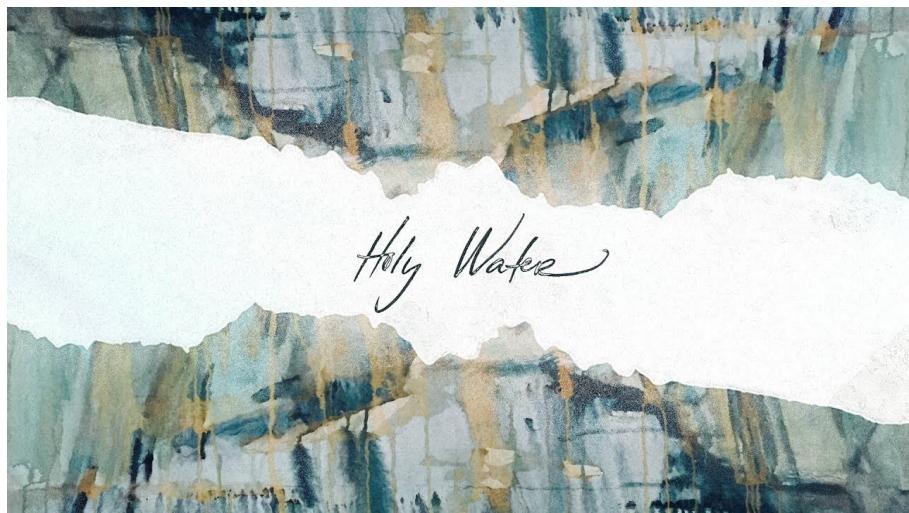
BIBLE-IN-MY-HEAD, HEART, AND HAND

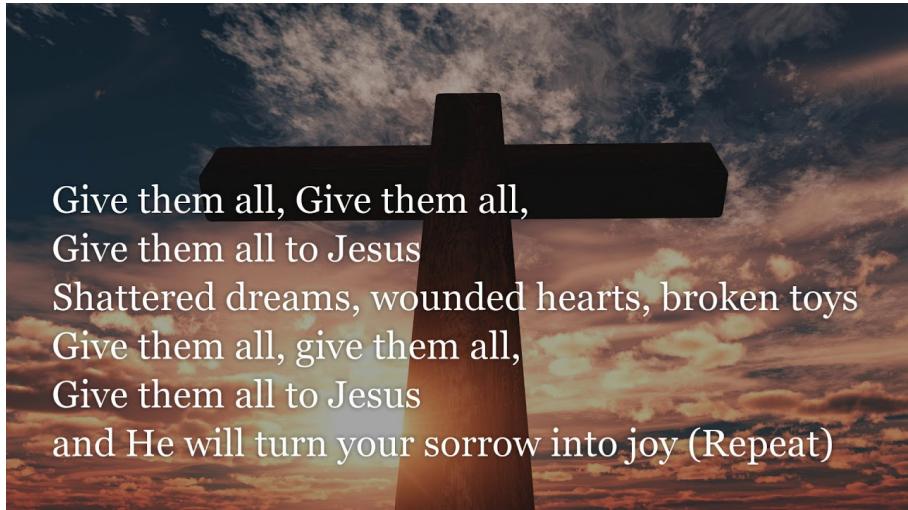
Several verses regarding baptism would be great to put into one's head, heart, and hand. "I die daily" (I Corinthians 15:31) is short and pointed. A portion of John 3:7 includes these words from Jesus to Nicodemus, "You must be born again."

Our first choice for this week comes from the "Bible Dialogue" section, verse 8 of Romans 6 (NLT): "Since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him."

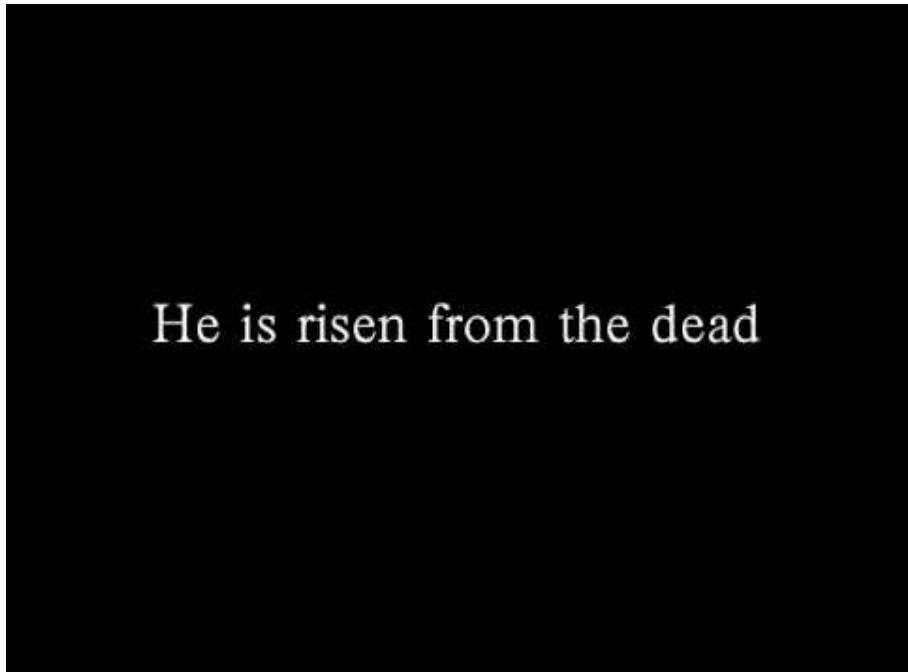


SING-ALONG



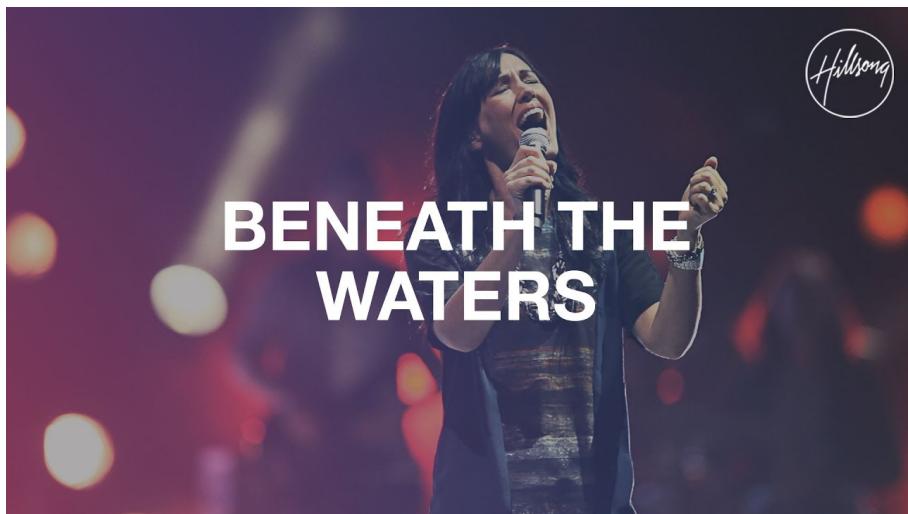


Give them all, Give them all,
Give them all to Jesus
Shattered dreams, wounded hearts, broken toys
Give them all, give them all,
Give them all to Jesus
and He will turn your sorrow into joy (Repeat)



He is risen from the dead

INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC



**CHRISTINE
IN ACTION**



Baptism Song

Couldn't fight back the tears,
so I fell on my knees.

Saying God if your there,
come and rescue me.



*Baptized
into
Christ*

KIDS OF ALL AGES

Attempting to introduce me to the congregation in a more personal way, the pastor decided to read a list of all my pets and their names. And I have to tell you - at 12 years old - when I thought I was going to grow up to be a veterinarian? I had a LOT of pets. Cats, dogs, rats, mice, snakes, fish, turtles, a bird, a frog, a rabbit, an iguana... did I have a partridge in a lead tree....?....maybe I'm forgetting some. The funny thing is that most of my pets were named after food. I must have gotten tired of trying to think of really creative pet names, or maybe I just really liked desserts at that age. So as the pastor read my pet list that day while I stood beside him in the water, I realized I sure did name a lot of pets after food... "Hershey, Taffy, Salt, Pepper, Cocoa, Cream - sounds like a cake mix!" he exclaimed to the audience. Everyone laughed so loudly, he had to stop and wait awhile before he could go on talking.

And that's it. That's the most memorable thing that happened on the day I was baptized. That's what everyone was talking about for a few weeks afterwards - me and all my pets named after ingredients.

But that's not what I was thinking about, weeks and weeks afterwards. Do you know what I was thinking about weeks and weeks afterwards? I'll tell you: I was obsessively thinking about trying not to make a single mistake ever again. I'd given my life to Jesus, you see, and I felt like that meant I should never do anything wrong. I felt this tremendous pressure to be good, and this enormous fear of sinning.

I'll never forget the day I finally snapped. It was my little brother (of course) making a mess in my room, and I screamed, "You're so annoying, just get out of my sight!" before I even knew it. And that was it - right then and there, I learned that even after baptism, I was never gonna be a perfect girl.

I'm so thankful that's not really what baptism is actually all about. Baptism is needed exactly because NONE of us will EVER be perfect. No

matter how hard we try. Even if we never had a single brother or sister. The Bible says that “ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) That means everyone!

What baptism really symbolizes is forgiveness of all our sins - past, present, and future - because we choose Jesus. When we decide to accept the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross, belong to Jesus, and give our lives to Him, we are “cleaned” from all these ugly sins. I say it’s a symbol because there aren’t literally sins floating in the water when you get baptized - “oh no, there’s my lie - and oops! There’s my jealousy!” No. The water is an example of how Jesus washes away our sins, so we don’t have to worry about trying to be perfect all the time. Which is good news for all people, of all ages, but especially those who have little brothers.

Thank you Jesus for dying for our sins. Thank you Jesus, that when I belong to you, I know I’m forgiven and I know I’m safe.

Family Talk Time:

1. Have we ever seen anyone get baptized? What do we remember about it? What were we thinking?
2. What does it mean when someone gets baptized?
3. Has anyone in our family been baptized, or is anyone thinking about being baptized? Why is this a choice we would make?
4. What does it mean to “belong to Jesus”? Why is this important?

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