

TEACHER GUIDE


TELL Bible Pathway

Part 1

Lesson 21



Why is Baptism Important? | tellnetwork.org

 **Watch video 21.** *Play the second video. Make sure all participants can see the screen and hear the audio. If you don't have a large enough screen or have trouble displaying the video, ask students to watch the video on their own before class. The Bible story is Acts 16:16-40.*

Lesson Goal: The goal of this class is to introduce yourself, introduce the class, and answer this question: “Why is Baptism important?”

Pre-Lesson Preparation: Read Acts 16:16-40.

Live Class Greet those who are listening to the class.

Prayer Asks for God’s blessings, focusing on the theme of the lesson, and effectively ending the greeting time and calling the lesson to order. The following prayer can be used:

Dear Father in heaven, my sins make it impossible for me to enter your kingdom on my own. But in your great mercy, you sent your Son Jesus to make my salvation possible. By his perfect life, innocent death, and victorious resurrection, you have taken away my sin and opened the kingdom of heaven to me and all believers. As we begin this course, in which we will talk about the gift of Baptism, send us your Holy Spirit through your Word that we might grow in faith and in the desire to share Jesus with others. In His name we pray. Amen.

Introduce The Course

- a. Explain the purpose of the course.
- b. Ask all to show respect for the teacher and other students by writing appropriate questions and comments on the Facebook Live chat.
- c. Explain that the **TELL** method is a teaching style with the goal of telling others what you’ve learned. The letters **T-E-L-L** represent four sections of study: **T** for Think, **E** for Evaluate, **L** for Learn and **L** for Lead.

Think: A powerful introduction that gets you thinking about an interesting topic, or question

Think about this: What do you know about baptism? Have you been baptized?
Let’s discover more about Jesus’ teaching of baptism in Acts 16:16-40.

Evaluate (brings more meaning and context to the lesson)

1. Who are the characters in the story? *Paul, Silas, and a jailer and his family*
2. What are the objects in the story? *Prison, stocks, prison doors, sword, lights, house, meal*
3. Where did the story happen? *The city of Philippi*
4. When did the story happen? *Shortly after Jesus' crucifixion, when the early Christian Church was beginning to expand*
5. What is the problem? *The jailer didn't know what to do to be saved.*
6. What happened in the story? *Paul and Silas drove a demon out of a young female slave. Because the demon helped the woman's owners earn money telling fortunes, the owners had Paul and Silas thrown into prison. That night, an earthquake shook the prison, opening all of the cells. The jailer responsible was about to kill himself when Paul shouted that all of the prisoners were still in their cells. The jailer was so grateful that he fell at their feet, asking how to be saved. Paul told him about Jesus, and the jailer invited them into his home to wash their wounds and to have himself and his family washed in a different way – through Baptism.*
7. Is the problem solved? *Yes. Paul and Silas were able to tell the jailer about the love of Jesus and the salvation He accomplished for us.*

Learn (identify that sin is the problem and only God has the answer)

1. What is the main theme of the lesson? *With the Holy Spirit's help, through God's Word and through Baptism, those who do not understand the gospel can be brought to faith in their Savior Jesus. All are able to be baptized through water and the Word.*
2. What sin does this lesson lead you to confess? *Never give up hope, even when it seems everything is going wrong. When we focus on Christ and what He has done for us, we can make it through any bad situations with His help.*
3. Where do you see the love of God in the lesson? *God sent his servants Paul and Silas to help the jailer understand and believe in Jesus. He also gave him and his family the blessing of Baptism.*
4. What does God teach you to do in the lesson? *Believe in the good news of the Bible, tell others about the Savior, and follow the command to baptize all nations.*

Lead (share this with a group of your brothers and sisters in Christ)

1. What would be a good situation in which to share this message? *This is good to share with someone who doesn't understand the gift of salvation spoken of in the Bible, or with someone who doesn't know what Baptism can do.*

Additional questions (add depth to the lesson)

1. By singing in their cell, what do you think Paul and Silas were trying to accomplish? What are some subtle ways you can use to invite people into a conversation about Jesus?

These apostles knew they could be happy and at peace in any situation. By singing, they were praising God in their circumstances and also showing others that they love God and trust Him no matter what happens. When we show our faith, the Holy Spirit can work through it to bring others to faith.

We can also invite people into conversations about Jesus in various ways: Are they going through a difficult situation? How can I pray for you? What physical needs do they have? How can I help? How can I demonstrate love that builds trust and perhaps create an opening to the eternal hope in Jesus I can share with them? Answers may vary.

2. What is a sacrament? *“Sacrament” is a word that means “sacred act”. It describes a command given by Jesus that includes an earthly element (i.e. bread, wine, water) and has an eternal promise (i.e. “for the forgiveness of sins”). The power and authority of the Sacraments that Jesus commands his church to use (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) is not found in the earthly elements or even the person who administers the Sacrament. Rather the power of such sacred acts is based in God’s promise in his word the Bible.*
3. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? (Ephesians 2:1-10) *Ephesians 2:1-10 teaches that the Holy Spirit brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life by forgiving sins and creating faith. This is a work of God. As we will see in the following passages, the New Testament connects forgiveness of sins, faith and God’s saving activity in our lives (“salvation”) with the water of Baptism.*
4. Where in the Bible does Jesus command baptism? *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)*
5. Where in the Bible does it say that in baptism God saves sinners?
“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (1 Peter 3:18-22)

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38-39)

6. Why is it biblical to baptize infants?

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)
Children are sinful from conception (original sin).*

The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them. (Ezekiel 18:20) Children are accountable for their sinfulness.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19) Jesus does not limit Baptism to a particular age group.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:37-39) At the command of Jesus the Apostle Peter preached repentance and baptism to a crowd of men, women and children, offering the gift of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit to all.

At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. (Acts 16:33) At the command of Jesus the Apostle Paul preached the gospel and applied the water of baptism to entire households. Households in ancient times included men, women, slaves and children. See also the baptism of Lydia's household (Acts 16:15)

People were also bringing babies (βρέφη) to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Luke 18:15-17) Greek word (βρέφη v.15) is only used of unborn and infants. Children are capable of believing and receiving the kingdom of God. In fact, they are examples! Therefore we do not deny God's gift of baptism and repentance to babies and infants.

Did the early church baptize infants?

- *The church father, Origen, (b. 185 AD), tells us the practice of baptizing children was handed down to them from the apostles.*
- *Irenaeus (202 AD), who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John wrote: “Christ came to save all men by himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn into God: infants, little children, boys, young men and old men.”*
- *The great Augustine (b. 353 AD) said he never heard of anyone who accepted the Bible as God’s Word and also rejected infant baptism.*
- *Numerous inscriptions on the graves in the catacombs, dating back to the very first centuries of Christianity, testify to the fact that the early Christians baptized their children. Here is one: “Aristus lived eight months. He was recently baptized.” (James Quaw, Bible Baptism: Or, The Immerser Instructed, from Various Sources, p.332)*

Why do some churches not baptize infants? They view baptism as a work of the individual. They call it “an outward sign of an inward change.” Since to them it is a work of the individual, only those who know about it and can ask for it will be baptized. This is taught nowhere in Scripture and came into practice during the 1600’s through the Anabaptists.

In summary: the Bible connects Baptism to the work of Jesus promising those who are baptized forgiveness of sins, a life of repentance, faith in Jesus and eternal life. Because all are sinful from birth and need God’s salvation in their life to be saved, Jesus commanded baptism and teaching of his word to all nations. Therefore the gift of baptism is for all. It is certainly possible to be saved without being baptized (see Luke 23:39-43 and Romans 10:17). However the New Testament examples of people hearing the gospel are accompanied by baptism. New Christians who learn about Jesus and the gift of baptism will also naturally desire it as another assurance of forgiveness and new life - a gift of God for them personally!

Lesson Wrap-Up

1. *Why is Baptism important? Allow time for various answers, and make sure that everyone is very clear about what Baptism is, why it’s important, and that we are all saved when we have faith in Jesus.*

Closing End with a prayer thanking God for the people he has brought together to learn about him and his Word, or with a blessing for the group.

Extra information for the teacher: Topics that may come up during the class

Ways to baptize – If the class asks about the different ways to baptize, extrapolate on the elements needed – water and the Word – and the various ways baptism can happen. While Jesus and the Ethiopian eunuch were baptized in rivers, the household in

Acts 16 probably just used water available in the home. During the days of the early Christian Church, the word “baptizo,” which was the word used for Baptism, could mean anything from immersion to washing or pouring. There is no Biblical command saying that a person needs to be fully under water in order for a baptism to work.

Who can baptize – If the class asks about who can perform a baptism, explain that the power of baptism rests in Jesus’ promise, not in the person doing the baptizing. Laypeople can perform baptisms if the situation calls for it.

The role of baptism in my life today – You might wonder, “Baptism is a onetime event. I was baptized years ago. What does it mean for me in my daily life now?” Baptism is very important, even for those of us who were baptized decades ago. We are new creations in Christ. We are believers. We are followers of Jesus. That is our true identity. However, while we are on this earth, our sinful nature remains in us, tempting us every second of every day. A key part of our fight against our sinful nature is daily repentance. God’s law crushes us. God’s gospel revives us and assures us of our forgiveness. That’s why we will want to think of our baptism every day. We see that God has made us his own children, putting Christ’s perfect robe on us, and giving us eternal life.

The People’s Bible – Consider reading the commentary on this section from *The People’s Bible: Acts* in your preparation for teaching this lesson.

