

DISCIPLES, WATER BAPTISM, AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Disciples, Water Baptism, and the Local Church

Key idea:

Disciples are those who have personally responded to Christ in repentance and faith, obey His command to be baptized, and are vital members of a local church.

Key text:

Acts 2:36-47

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸ 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.³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common.⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Key points:

1. Discipleship begins when we respond to God by repenting of our sins and actively trust in Jesus and God’s Promise of salvation (the Gospel).
2. Baptism is the initial act of obedient faith for all disciples. Discipleship apart from water baptism is no more conceivable than discipleship apart from learning and obeying the Word of God.

3. All disciples are called to become active members in local churches, gathering for worship, building close relationships, serving one another, and reaching the world together.
4. Disciples LOVE OUR GOD, CONNECT WITH OTHERS, SERVE HIS CHURCH, and REACH THE WORLD.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Why is it critical for me to constantly remind myself that I made right with God by faith alone - not by water baptism, church membership, or any other good works?
3. Why does the New Testament stress water baptism so much? What are some of the things I am taught about water baptism in the New Testament? (See [Catechism questions 75, 76, and 77](#) for more information).
4. Why is membership in a local church essential for my growth in the faith and obedience to Christ's commands?
5. When I consider Luke's description of the local church in Acts 2:36-47, do I think it could be done "virtually"? Or does it require physical presence? Why?
6. How high a priority is gathering with the local church for worship I'm my life and the life of my family? What is preventing me from gathering with the church each week? Do I need to make any changes?
7. Am I developing close connections and relationships with other believers in BRCC? How often do I have contact with someone other than Sunday morning? How can I grow in this area?
8. How am I serving my brothers and sisters in BRCC at present? What is preventing me from serving the local church? Where do I think God is calling me to serve?
9. Who will I call or see to encourage this week? Who can I invite to BRCC this week?

For Further Study:

[Catechism questions 75–77](#)

["Water Baptism" teaching series](#) (March-May, 2010)

[“Disciples” teaching series](#) (February-March, 2019)

[“What is the Church?” teaching series](#) (August-November, 2020)

Preview of next week: Exile Prayers (Daniel 9:1-19)