



ENTERING INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

MY SEARCH FOR PEACE

TRY JESUS COURSE BOOK 23

"IF MUM LOVES ME AND CAN FORGIVE ME, WHY COULDN'T I BELIEVE JESUS CAN DO THE SAME? IT TOOK SOUL SEARCHING AND PRAYER, BUT NOW I KNOW." - Kerri Stephensen

MY SEARCH FOR PEACE

23 – ENTERING A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

I'd have scoffed if anyone had said to me as I witnessed Mum and Dad's baptism that I, too, would one day be baptised. Almost a year after their baptism my parents rejoiced with me at the birth of David Andrew – my son, their first grandson. Three weeks later, tragedy. My brother, their only son, Brendan, was killed. Brendan was my closest confidant.

While Mum and Dad had to cope with the loss of their son, they had to also contend with a wayward, guilty daughter. I began to have no concept of right or wrong. I became self-absorbed in my own guilt and mourning, and I couldn't see the pain I caused my parents, friends and relatives. I turned to drugs and alcohol to help make me feel good. Then it got worse. I used to be a devil worshipper. I felt he understood me. At times I tried to leave him, but he kept pulling me back.



Pastor Ed Totenhofer, the then pastor of the Lilydale church, Victoria, Australia, tried to help, but I eventually told him not to worry - I was a lost cause. There was so much confusion in my life.

I used to speak with the devil, and he told me that if I ever tried to leave him something precious would be taken away from me. I "knew" Brendan had died because of me. I was the bad one and, when I sought help, my brother died.

I understand now what was happening, but back then I was too scared to seek help. If Satan could take away my brother, he could take my little baby just as easily. I thought I was saving everyone by not continuing my studies with Pastor Ed.

That's what Satan wanted me to think. He wanted me to believe that's just the way life goes for some people. He wanted me to believe that it wasn't worth living anymore, that there was no future and, worse, that Jesus would never forgive me.

When my father died, after a short illness, I thought I'd do the right thing by Mum and accompany her to church. It would be just until I felt she was OK to go by herself. I had no intention of going for myself, or the Lord, or, I'm ashamed to say, for the salvation of my son.

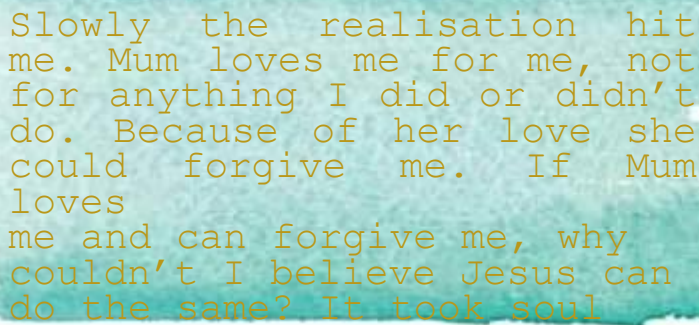
One Sabbath something happened. Listening to the hymns, I felt something stirring inside. I tried desperately to hide the tears falling freely. I tried to dismiss what was happening and tried to think of the last time I felt the same stirring - when I held my son for the first time. Then I remembered: three weeks later my brother died. I couldn't risk losing my baby to Satan, so I fought the feelings tooth and nail.

I lost. I had to find out more about Jesus. If Satan had so much power over me, and Jesus was the stronger, why not pray? That is so obvious now, but back then I felt Jesus had left me to fend for myself. After what I'd put everyone through, He wouldn't, couldn't, love me. Could He?

Eventually, I started lessons with Neil and Joseph [current pastor and his assistant]. I was confused. They kept telling me Jesus doesn't keep records [See Psalm 103:10-13; Micah 7:18, 19; Isaiah 43:25].

Did I want to repent? Yes. Did I love Jesus? Yes. But I still couldn't comprehend forgiveness. How could anyone forgive me?

Mum was nice to me, but why? Because I went to church with her? Because the grandson I gave her looked so much like her own son? Surely it couldn't be because she loved me, not after the living hell I'd put her and Dad through?



Slowly the realisation hit me. Mum loves me for me, not for anything I did or didn't do. Because of her love she could forgive me. If Mum loves me and can forgive me, why couldn't I believe Jesus can do the same? It took soul searching and prayer, but now I know.

And I did get baptised. I know Jesus loves me. I know Jesus died for me. I know He forgives me. I know every day, when I wake up, He's there. When I'm in trouble, tempted or confused, I know He's only a prayer away. I know Jesus' love will never leave me. If I stumble and fall, He's waiting to help me up. Knowing this, I turned my back on my old way of life. I can't believe I'm the same person. I am, yet I'm not. It's still me, but my mind is at peace and my soul is no longer tortured.

My only regret is that my Dad died before he could see the daughter he always wanted. Will he get a surprise

when Jesus returns! I'm probably the last person he expected to see in God's great kingdom. (Adapted from Kerri Sterphensed, "My Search for Peace," *Record*)



Kerri found peace through a right relationship with Jesus. All the knowledge of Bible teachings concerning latter-day events, such as the antichrist, Armageddon, the mark of the beast, etc, are of no avail if we don't have this relationship with Jesus. That's the purpose of this Bible guide. Baptism is the Bible way we show our acceptance of what Jesus has done for us. It is a public expression of our decision to follow Him.

The Baptism of Jesus

1. Who is first mentioned in the New Testament as practising baptism? Matthew 3:1-6 (page 682 in NIV Bible: International Bible Society, 00195)
2. Why did Jesus say that it was necessary for Him to be baptised? Matthew 3:13-15 (page 682)
Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all _____." Then John consented.

There were several reasons for Jesus' baptism:

- a. All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus.
 - b. At Jesus' baptism John publicly announced the arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (John 1:31-34, page 750).
 - c. By His baptism Jesus completely identified Himself with our sin and failure (though He Himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin), becoming our substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21, page 819).
 - d. His baptism was an example to His followers. (NIV Study Bible notes) As one with us He must bear the burden of our guilt and woe. The Sinless One must feel the shame of sin.
3. How was Jesus baptised by John? Mark 1:9, 10 (page 707)
At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming _____ of the _____, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

For the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word "baptise"- that those who were baptised were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. (A P Stanley, *Christian Institutions*, page 19)

The Meaning of Baptism

4. On what three great acts of Jesus does salvation centre? 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (page 815)

I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you... For what I received I passed on to you as of _____ importance: that Christ _____ for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was _____, that he was _____ on the third day according to the Scriptures.

This is the heart of the gospel. Some people want to deny what happened to Jesus or try to explain it away. Here is a letter written to the magazine Christianity Today along with the response:

Dear Eutyclus:

Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?

Sincerely,
Bewildered

Dear Bewildered:

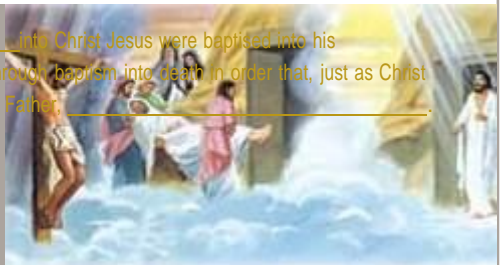
Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens.

Sincerely, Eutyclus

5. In what way does baptism by immersion symbolise and commemorate these three events? Romans 6:3-6 (page 799)

Or don't you know that all of us who were _____ into Christ Jesus were baptised into his _____? We were therefore _____ with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was _____ from the dead through the glory of the Father, _____.

The resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Christianity would never have got off the ground without it. Without it those who trust in Jesus



If the resurrection was a hoax, the disciples would have known about it.

The focal point of the New Testament is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He went through this experience as our **Substitute** and **Representative**. As our **Substitute** He took our place and died for our sins, as our **Representative** all that is His - His perfect life, His victory over sin and Satan, and His righteous character - is counted as mine. What He has done for us is **credited** to us when we accept Him by faith. In the New Testament, baptism is the ceremony by which we, by faith, symbolically identify ourselves with what Jesus has accomplished for us.

6. What great commission did Christ give His church? Matthew 28:19, 20 (page 706)

7. What did Jesus say it means to be His disciple? Luke 9:23-26 (page 733)

Discipleship involves personal allegiance to Jesus, expressed in following Him and giving Him an exclusive loyalty (Mark 8:34-38, page 714; Luke 14:26-33, page 739). In at least some cases it meant literal abandonment of home, business ties and possessions (Mark 10:21, 28, page 716), but in every case readiness to put the claims of Jesus first, whatever the cost, was demanded.

The Spreading Flame

8. How did Peter tell the people on the Day of Pentecost that they should demonstrate their repentance? Acts 2:38 (page 772)

Peter replied, "Repent and be _____, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the _____ of your sins. And you will _____ the gift of the Holy Spirit."

9. In the story of the Ethiopian treasurer, how did Philip baptise him? Acts 8:26-39 (page 777)

Then both Philip and the eunuch went _____ the water and Philip baptised him. When they came _____ of the water...

10. What great experience is commemorated, for us, when we are baptised? Galatians 3:26-29 (page 825)

You are all sons [children] of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have _____ yourselves with Christ.

The Body of Christ - The Church

11. When we are baptised, what do we become a part of? 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 (page 813)

The _____ is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all _____ by one Spirit into _____ body.

FIRST of all, baptism takes us back to what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross.

It symbolises our identification with what He did for us in His **death, burial and resurrection**. Paul in Colossians says: "Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (2:12, page 834). **When Jesus died we died; when He was buried we were buried; when He rose we rose.**

SECOND, baptism symbolises the change that takes place in the lives of those who have accepted what Christ has done for them. It commemorates the beginning of a new life in Christ. This is likened to a new birth (John 3:1-8, page 751).

THIRD, baptism represents the entrance into membership of the body of Christ - the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23, page 827)

12. What was Paul told to do when he understood the plan of salvation? Acts 22:16 (page 790)

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be _____ and wash your sins away, calling on his name.



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This challenge comes home to the heart of everyone who learns the truth about baptism. It symbolises our identification with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection. It's the public seal of our discipleship and God is honoured by our obedience. And it's the formal entrance of membership into the body of Christ, the church.

It would have been wrong for Kerri to have been baptised with her parents, when she hadn't accepted Jesus and committed her life to Him. But once she understood and accepted what Jesus had done for her, it would've been inconsistent for her not to be baptised. In fact, it would've been difficult for her not to be baptised. Jesus freed her from her guilt and changed her life.

Would you like to identify with what Jesus has done for you and be baptised?

Yes, I would like to show my acceptance of what Jesus has done for me by being baptised.

I would like to learn more about the significance of baptism.



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How does baptism illustrate what Jesus has done for you?

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