

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 2 NOVEMBER 2020 – 8 NOVEMBER 2020



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV2011)

Matthew 28:19-20 is usually called the Great Commission. And rightly so. It was the last command Jesus gave to all His disciples before He was taken up to heaven. Ever since then, it has been the marching orders for Christians and churches. But what exactly are we commanded to do here? Kevin DeYoung explains:

The Great Commission in Matthew 28, as I’ve told my congregation many times, has one imperative verb and three supporting participles. The main verb is not “go,” though it looks like it in our English translations. The main verb is the command “make disciples.” The three participles explain how the command is fulfilled. We make disciples of all nations by going, baptising, and teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. We understand the going part of the Great Commission. That’s why we have missions week. We get the teaching part too. That’s the whole point in going. But many of us don’t think a lot about the baptising part. And yet, Jesus makes it one of the key elements in fulfilling the Great Commission. So it must be crucially important.¹

Even if you didn’t know some words like “participles” or “imperative” and such, I hope you can see DeYoung’s point here. The Great Commission Jesus gave us is to make disciples. And we do that by “going”, “teaching”, and yes, by “baptising” too. In the coming couple of weeks, we’ll be learning about baptism as one of the two sacraments. I hope the questions and answers as well as the bible passages help you to remember the meaning and importance of baptism.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p127.

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM²

Lord's Day 26

Q69) How does baptism remind you and assure you that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross is for you personally?

A) In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly His blood and His Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, that is, all my sins.

Q70) What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

A) To be washed with Christ's blood means that God, by grace, has forgiven my sins because of Christ's blood poured out for me in His sacrifice on the cross. To be washed with Christ's Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.

Q71) Where does Christ promise that we are washed with His blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A) In the institution of baptism where He says: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins.

ACTS 2:38

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.

Even after seeing the resurrected Jesus and Him ascending into heaven, the disciples were still afraid of the Jewish authorities and weren't sure what to do. None of them tried to tell the unbelieving people about the risen Jesus. But when the Holy Spirit came, the disciples were transformed and empowered to preach the gospel to all people. On the very day when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, Peter boldly preached the risen Jesus to people, even accusing the audience for killing Jesus. When he was finished, the hearers were "cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" To this, Peter didn't just say, "have faith in Jesus"; although this is implied. Peter didn't simply say, "repent" although it's included. Peter said, "Repent and be baptised." Here we see how important baptism is. Whatever else we can say about baptism, the Bible doesn't tell us it's something we can take or leave. Have you repented and been baptised?

TITUS 3:5

5 [God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

In this verse, Paul explains that our righteous works are not the reason God saved us. Rather, it is because of God's own mercy. Paul adds, "by washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." The washing is symbolised by the water in baptism. Of course, our sins are not automatically washed by pouring water over us (or dunking under water), and that's not what Paul means. So he adds, "renewal of the Holy Spirit." Our spiritual washing by baptism happens when the Holy Spirit washes us and makes us clean. Nevertheless, it is God's own choosing to combine these two, washing by water (water baptism) and washing by the Spirit (Spirit baptism) and we ought not to neglect one or the other.

² The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.