

Introduction:

This morning message is a direct by-product of a contentious discussion in our weekly staff meeting. The issue at hand was **THE PRIORITY OF WATER BAPTISM.**

The perception by some on my team were:

Valley Christian Center does **NOT** want to baptize people:

1. We don't regularly offer classes on baptism to our children.
2. We don't believe we tell our youth or encourage them to be baptized.
3. We don't encourage baptism from the pulpit regularly. At best we cram in into the announcements a week or two before a "scheduled baptism."
4. We don't ask our volunteers if they have been baptized nor encourage them to do so.
5. It puts a tremendous amount of pressure and completely throws off our facilities schedule to have a baptism - it would just be better if we didn't have any.

The thought was that water baptism was supposed to be a high water mark for us, but it seems to be too much of a burden to encourage and facilitate. Perhaps we should re-consider what is important to us. **Is this important to us, or not?**

Today, we take a break from our Sermon on the Mount series to give focus to the topic of **water baptism**. Ironically, for all the familiarity of baptism, most churches never preach on it.

Preview:

1. Give a lens on how to interpret baptisms as a church community
2. Provide several reasons why baptism is important.

Lens for the church community:

Football is essentially an easy game to understand - simply get the pig skin across this line more than the opposing team. Now I didn't say it was easy to **execute**. Touchdowns are clear indicators of progress. How do we ever know if we are progressing, really progressing in the church? Is it attendance, giving, ministries, prayer, confessions of faith. I tell you it is baptisms, water baptisms. **Baptisms are touchdown moments for the church community.**

These touchdown moments are essential for the community of faith. They remind us why we are all here. They show us the fruit of our sacrifice. They encourage us in the journey. They demonstrate to us that Jesus **STILL** has the power to save, to deliver and to heal.

Top 20 reasons why baptism is important...

1. Jesus DID it.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9) and even baptized more people than John the Baptist (John 4:1) although it was the disciples who did the actual immersing (John 4:2). **If, as Christ followers, He is our example, then we should follow His lead. Bottom line: If Jesus got baptized so should we.**

2. Jesus COMMANDS it...

Jesus made baptism part of his ministry and part of our mission. Baptism is not man's idea. It was God's idea. It is not a denominational thing. It is a Biblical thing. It STARTED with JOHN THE BAPTIST at the beginning of our gospels. He came, verse 11 says, to "baptize with water for repentance." It CONTINUED in THE MINISTRY OF JESUS himself. And the practice WAS PICKED UP by THE CHURCH not because of their own wisdom, but because of the command of the Lord.

Christ commands that every Christian be baptized. "Jesus said, 'Go then to all people every and (1) make them My disciples, (2) baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (3) teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" (Mt. 28:19-20). Notice the order: You make the disciples, then you baptize them, then you spend the rest of your life growing as a Christian.

3. Baptism was practiced for ALL converts in ALL the churches.

We know of **NO UNBAPTIZED BELIEVERS** in the NT (except the thief on the cross, Luke 23:43). For example, in Romans 6 Paul says to a church that he has never visited (in answer to a question whether Christians can sin that grace may abound), *"How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that ALL of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?"* (Romans 6:2-3).

In other words, he bases his argument that Christians can't go on willfully sinning on the fact that we have **ALL** died with Christ, as baptism shows. Dead men don't sin. He assumes that the Roman believers were **ALL** baptized, and he was simply reminding them what it stood for. **IT WAS A UNIVERSAL, DEFINING EXPERIENCE IN THE EARLY CHURCH. IF WE ARE TO BE IN SYNC WITH THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE ENTIRE EARLY CHURCH WE MUST TAKE BAPTISM SERIOUSLY AND PRACTICE IT FAITHFULLY.**

4. Great Commission Criteria.

At the end of his earthly ministry Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). **Baptism is central to the standing orders of Jesus found in the Great Commission.** “Go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them...”

One sign that we are fulfilling the Great Commission as a church is the fact we are baptizing people. Or to say it another way, one sign we are neglecting or failing in the Great Commission is the baptismal tank is not being used.

{Health Chart Slide of VCC baptism}

If all roads lead to evangelism in the church, than the tank should have a line. **I believe water baptism is one of the most important Health Stats of any church.** It shows our hunger for souls. It measures to some degree our outreach to the city. No matter what form of evangelism we believe in (tracts, service, apologetics, testimony) as some point, people, if they accept Christ people should go public with that decision through water baptism.

5. Going PUBLIC with our PRIVATE decision for Christ.

If you ask **WHAT WAS THE DECISIVE, PUBLIC WAY OF TAKING A CHRISTIAN STAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**, the answer is, **WATER BAPTISM**. Going public means that you are telling the world **WHOSE** you now belong; telling the world **WHERE** one stands. If your faith has any substance, any real conviction, any will behind it, you then go **PUBLIC** with it and get baptized.

The message Peter gave in Acts 2 ended with the words, **“Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ”** (Acts 2:38). Our renewed conviction is that we need to regularly offer baptism as the **decisive public way for people to respond publicly to the gospel.**

6. Not a statement of PERFECTION, but DIRECTION.

Baptism is public statement of where one is charting their course. We are not telling the world we have arrived at some perfect state spiritually. We are simply telling them that I have entrusted my life to Christ and I will do my best to live each day with that in mind. He leads and I will follow. It is **charting my life’s course in the footsteps of Jesus.**

7. **Gives people an opportunity TO HEAR MY STORY.**

Baptisms are a perfect time to recap one's "story" or "testimony". It is a unique opportunity to write down on paper those people and key events that brought me to this juncture. I find most people have never done this and it begins to connect the pieces of how God orchestrated specific events to bring salvation.

According to Revelation 12, your testimony is one of the tools that defeats the devil. It also aids us in knowing how BIG this moment really is for you.

It also gives the candidate the chance to say, "Thank you" to key folks who helped me get this far. I encourage them to use names of significant people who have aided them in their story.

It is also one of the most powerful ways to share the gospel with family and friends who may not come to church otherwise. People today may be reluctant to come to church, but if you invite them to your baptismal service, most people will not refuse. When they are here, they can hear numerous stories of the power of the Gospel.

8. **ONE of TWO ORDINANCES in the church.**

It has been said that the essence of the Christian faith can be summarized with "a meal and a bath." This morning we celebrated the Lord's communion and now we are talking about water baptism.

We do **NOT** call them **SACRAMENTS** like the Catholics because we don't believe these ceremonies convey grace to people without requiring faith from the person participating in them. Rather we call them **ORDINANCES** instead because they were **ORDAINED** by the Lord.

6. WE BELIEVE...and practice two ordinances—(1) **Water Baptism by Immersion** after repenting of one's sins and receiving Christ's gift of salvation, and (2) **Holy Communion** (the Lord's Supper) as a symbolic remembrance of Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

What is interesting is our **BIAS** of one over the other. While there is a ton of verses in the NT on baptism and only a handful in the NT for communion. We tend to live as if one must have center stage and occur with quite regularity (some insisting even every week for communion) and the other happen of an off night and only when we need it...that being water baptism.

9. **ENTRANCE WAY into Christ's community.**

This ceremony is not only **PUBLIC**, but it is **COMMUNAL**. Baptism has typically been the entrance into the church community. Before membership classes, baptism have been the moment where people identify and align themselves up a group of Christ-followers. **Baptism is also a choice to embrace Christ's church and a particular local fellowship.**

10. **ONE of the MOST IMPORTANT CEREMONIES in our life.**

Life can be summarized by its ceremonies. In fact, anything of great importance in our life, we signify it with a ceremony. That could be graduation, wedding, birthdays, retirement, military or business recognition, elections to positions, etc. **In the Christian movement, we have two ceremonies. COMMUNION THAT FOCUSES ON CHRIST DECISION FOR US AND BAPTISM THAT FOCUSES ON OUR DECISION FOR CHRIST.**

As one of life's most significant ceremony, it should be a big deal. That means giving it "prime time". None of us would want communion relegated to a Sunday night. Friends and family need to be invited. Invitations sent. Gifts exchanged. Stories told.

11. **DEMONSTRATES that I am a believer.**

Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It just shows that you are a Christian. *A wedding ring doesn't make a person married. It is a symbol of a commitment and that a person is married. The commitment is what makes a person married, not the ring. If a person loses this ring, they'd still be married.*

Baptism then, is an outward symbol of an inward commitment. Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. It's just an outward symbol of an inward commitment. It is your commitment to Christ that saves you. Baptism just says to the world, *"I'm not ashamed to tell the whole world what's happened to me. I've given my life to Christ."*

12. **It's MY CHOICE this time.**

Many of us were baptized as infants. I was. During that time, we had no say in the ceremony. If we did, I doubt we would have picked those "baby dresses" our mom picked for us. It was our parent's choice, not ours.

If belief precedes baptism (**conscious faith and repentance**), and belief presumes we are cognizant enough to understand the Gospel and make a decision, than I suggest some here need to be baptized because **YOU** are making the decision. This view is often called "**BELIEVER'S BAPTISM**," since it holds that **ONLY THOSE WHO GIVE REASONABLE EVIDENCE OF BELIEVING IN CHRIST SHOULD BE BAPTIZED.** Baptism then is a symbol of beginning the Christian life and should only be given to those who have, in fact, begun the

Christian life. While faith is possible without baptism (Luke 23:43ff), baptism is a natural result of saving faith. Let me give you some Biblical examples:

After Peter's sermon at Pentecost, we read, "***Those who received his word were baptized***" (Acts 2:41). In this setting, baptism was only administered to those who "received his word" and therefore trusted Christ for salvation.

Similarly, when Philip preached in Samaria, we read, "***When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.***" (Acts 8:12).

Likewise, when Peter preached to the Gentiles at Cornelius' household, he allowed baptism for those who *heard* the Word and *received the Holy Spirit* - that is, gave convincing evidence of the internal work of salvation (Acts 10:47-48).

These passages make clear that *only* those who have received the Gospel and trusted Christ for salvation should be baptized.

How old should children be before they are baptized?

Old enough to give a *believable* profession of faith. It is impossible to set a precise age, but parents should see convincing evidence of an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ and with regards to the act of baptism. Neither the arguments that children or infants who are baptized possess an unconscious faith, nor the argument that the faith of the parents (or the church) avails as a means of salvific grace is tenable. **Parents should discern when their children are genuinely being moved by God to obey Him in this ordinance or when they merely want to "parrot" or "copy cat" their friends who are being baptized.**

13. IT'S TIME.

For some here, you have been dragging your feet. Your personal belief in Christ has not translated into open obedience to baptism. The Bible says: "***Those who accepted his message were baptized***" (Acts 2:41). You accepted or received the message. It's now time to be baptized.

14. Puts A CHAPTER MARKER in my life.

Jonathan Edwards. Resolved, Frequently to renew the dedication of myself to God, which was made at my baptism, which I solemnly renewed, when I was received into the communion of the church; and which I have solemnly re-made this twelfth day of January, 1722-3. Do you have a date?

Some here may need a ceremony to commemorate a new season or chapter in your life. People ask me, "Can I be baptized again?" I often answer, "Do you take communion only once?" Now I don't recommend doing it every month. But I often see people get baptized in the Jordan River in Israel. They do it to

commemorate a moment in their journey. Some here may need such a ceremony to tell yourself and the world what God is doing recently. Perhaps you have fallen way. This is one way to seal the recommitment.

15. Because I NEVER WAS IMMERSSED.

We here at VCC baptize people by **IMMERSION**, or put completely under water and then brought back up again. Typically, this is done in our baptismal tank in the church sanctuary. There are some churches that sprinkle a little water on your forehead. Some pour a little water. Some dip a little bit. Other churches put you all the way under the water. The evidence for such practice is as follows:

a. Because Jesus was baptized that way. We want to do it the way they did it in the Bible. It says “*As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.*” He went down to the Jordan river. John the Baptist baptized Him in the river. He set the example.

b. That’s what the word literally means. The Greek word for baptism (βαπτίζω) used both inside and outside the Bible means, “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water.

c. The picture we put together from several stories in the Bible seems to suggest that people were baptized by immersion. When John baptized Jesus, the text tells us “He came up *out of the water*” (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10). The same is said of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:39). We also learn from the Gospels that John the Baptist “was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, *because there was much water there*” (John 3:23). It would not take “much water” to baptize someone if another mode of baptism were used such as sprinkling. Finally, the earliest Christian discussions outside the New Testament instructs the use of “running water” for baptism inferring immersion (Didache 7:1-4)

16. ARGUMENTS FOR INFANT BAPTISM by some traditions are UNTENABLE.

Those who defend infant baptism often appeal to circumcision as the old sign of the covenant and say that baptism is the new sign. The one was given to infants and so should the other be. Circumcision was the sign of belonging to the Old Covenant people of God. Every Jewish male received it. If you were born Jewish, you received the sign of the covenant as a baby boy. So at least some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to see circumcision as the sign of God’s favor and of their security as the covenant people.

But John’s baptism was a radical attack on this false security. He infuriated the Pharisees by calling the people to renounce reliance on the sign of the covenant that they got when they were infants, and to receive another sign to show that they were not relying on Jewish birth, but on the mercy of God received by repentance and faith. A new people within Israel was being formed, and a new sign of a new covenant was being instituted. It was not a simple continuation of circumcision. It was an indictment of a misuse of

circumcision as a guarantee of salvation. Circumcision was a sign of ethnic continuity; baptism was a sign of spiritual reality.

John's baptism is not simple continuation of circumcision. The most important thing to learn is that when a Jewish person received John's baptism, it was a radical act of individual commitment to belong to the true people of God, based on personal confession and repentance, NOT on corporate identity with Israel through birth.

17. Picture of SURRENDER.

Baptism is a picture of surrender. We surrender by obeying Christ's command to do it. We surrender when we go under the water symbolizes that all of us, every bit, we place under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

18. Picture of CLEANSING.

Little Betsy had faithfully attended baptism classes. Her mother, wanting to be sure her daughter understood its significance, asked, "Honey, what does baptism mean?"

"Well, IT ISN'T THE WATER THAT MAKES YOU CLEAN..." she began.

Smiling, Mother thought, Yes, she understands,

"... IT'S THE SOAP."

Water has numerous meanings to any faith. For the Christian, it can symbolize life, the Holy Spirit, spiritual thirst, heaven and cleansing. The baptismal waters represent the washing of our sins by Jesus Christ. We shower each day to wash dirt from our physical bodies. In this ceremony, we enter the cleansing streams of Jesus who justifies us and washes away past, present and future sin.

Titus 3:5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

19. Picture of DEATH and RESURRECTION.

It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection. Baptism portrays your desire to die to the old life and walk a new path following Jesus.

Baptism illustrates my new life as a Christian. 2 Corinthians 5:17: "When anyone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun." In the Bible, there was no such thing as a person claiming to be a Christian and not be baptized. It was automatic.

Paul says, “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized *into* Christ Jesus were *baptized into* his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, *just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*” (Rom. 6:3-4) Similarly, he writes, “*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*”

Notice the repetition of the word “**INTO**” in verses 3 and 4. Baptized “into Christ Jesus,” and baptized “into his death” (verse 3), and baptism “into death” (verse 4a). What this says is that baptism portrays our union with Christ, that is, we are united to him spiritually so that his death becomes our death and his life will become our life.

Coming out of the water is then a picture of being raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. The decent into the water portrays death to the old way of life and the ascent from the water represent a new kind of life in Christ.

How do we experience this? How do you know if this has happened to you? The answer is that it is experienced by faith. You can hear this in the parallel verses. Galatians 2:20 makes the connection with faith: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live **BY FAITH** in the Son of God...” In other words, the “I” who died was the old unbelieving, rebellious “I” and the “I” who came to life was the “I” of faith – “The life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God.” And the basis of all this is union with Christ – “Christ lives in me.” And I live in him – in spiritual union with him. His death is my death and his life is being lived out in my life.

In baptism we are INITIATED, CROWNED, CHOSEN, EMBRACED, WASHED, ADOPTED, GIFTED, REBORN, KILLED, and thereby SENT FORTH and REDEEMED. We are IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF GOD’S OWN, THEN ASSIGNED OUR PLACe and OUR JOB WITHIN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

20. You get a T-SHIRT.

SPIRIT
HOLY SPIRIT

NEW CREATION
THE FATHER
NEW THE SON

WATER

BAPTISM





**U.S. Olympic
Committee
is pleased to
announce the
appointment of
Barry**

A sunset over a body of water. In the foreground, the silhouettes of four people are visible, standing on a dark surface. The water reflects the orange and yellow light of the setting sun. Large, bold, blue text is overlaid on the image. The text is split into two parts: '20 Reasons' on the left and 'Why Baptism is Important...' on the right. The word 'WHY' is written in a very large, bold, blue font across the bottom of the image.

20 Reasons

Why Baptism is Important...

WHY

1

Jesus did it.

WALK WITH US

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Jesus commands it.

QUALITY

3.

Baptism was practiced
by ALL converts
in ALL the churches.

BAPTISM

4.

Great Commission Criteria.

QUALITY





Water Baptisms



Current month baptisms/YTD baptisms

5

Going public with
a private decision.

QUALITY



Q. Not a statement of perfection, but direction.

QUALITY

7.

Gives people an
opportunity
to hear my story.

QUALITY

8.

One of two
ordinances
of the church.

BAPTISM

Q.

Entrance way to
Christ's community.

QUALITY



10. One of the most important ceremonies in our life.

QUALITY

ILL

**Demonstrates that
I am a believer.**

QUALITY



It's

my choice this time.

QUALITY

13.

It's time.

QUALITY



14.

Puts a chapter
marker in my life.

QUALITY

ES.

Because I never
was immersed.

QUALITY

A photograph of four people silhouetted against a bright sunset over a beach. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow and long shadows. The people are standing on the sand, and their reflections are visible in the shallow water. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

16.

Arguments for infant baptism are untenable.

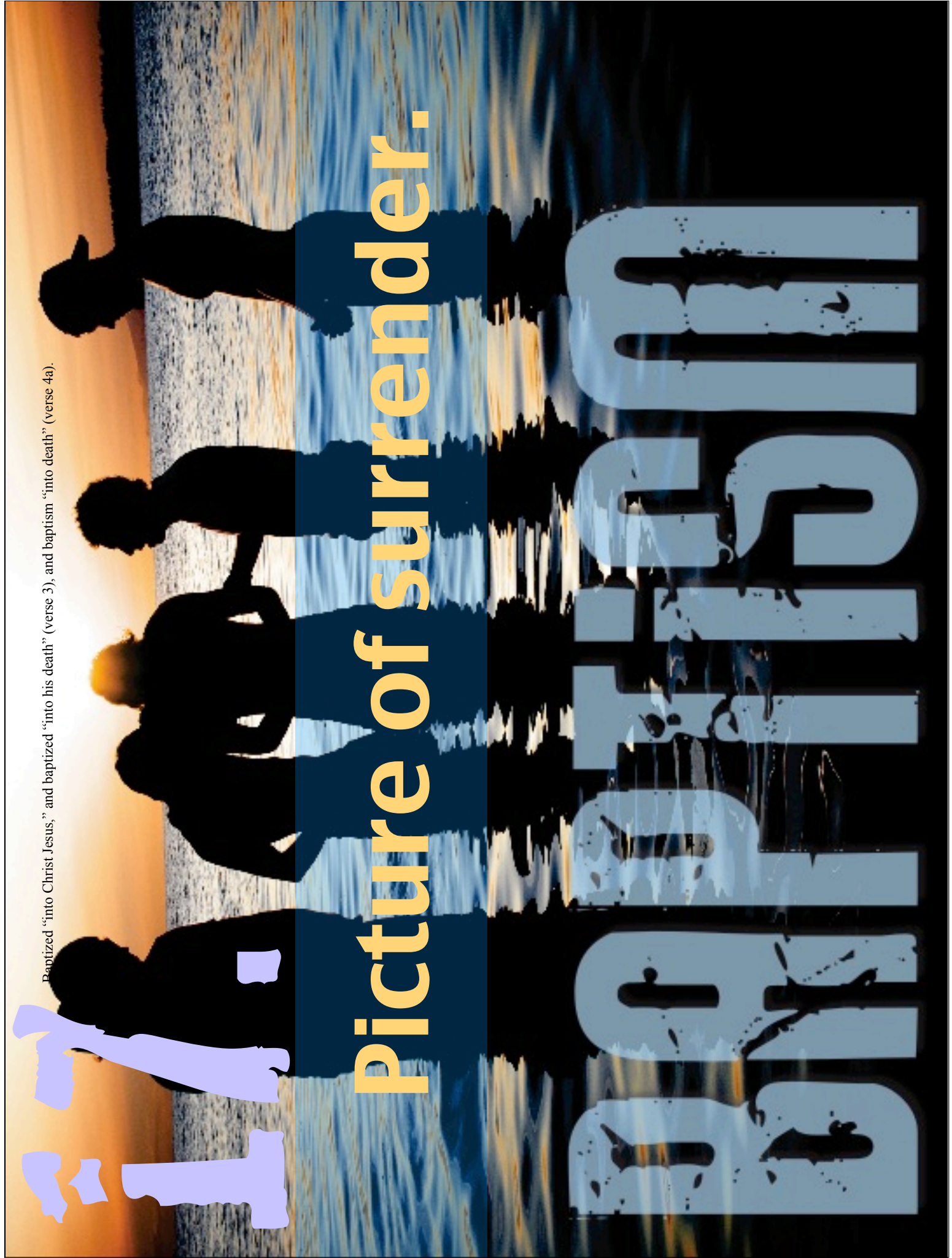
QUALITY

11.

Baptized "into Christ Jesus," and baptized "into his death" (verse 3), and baptism "into death" (verse 4a).

Picture of surrender.

QUALITY



18.

Picture of cleansing.

QUALITY

10.

Picture of death
and resurrection.

QUALITY

20.

Get a t-shirt.

QUALITY





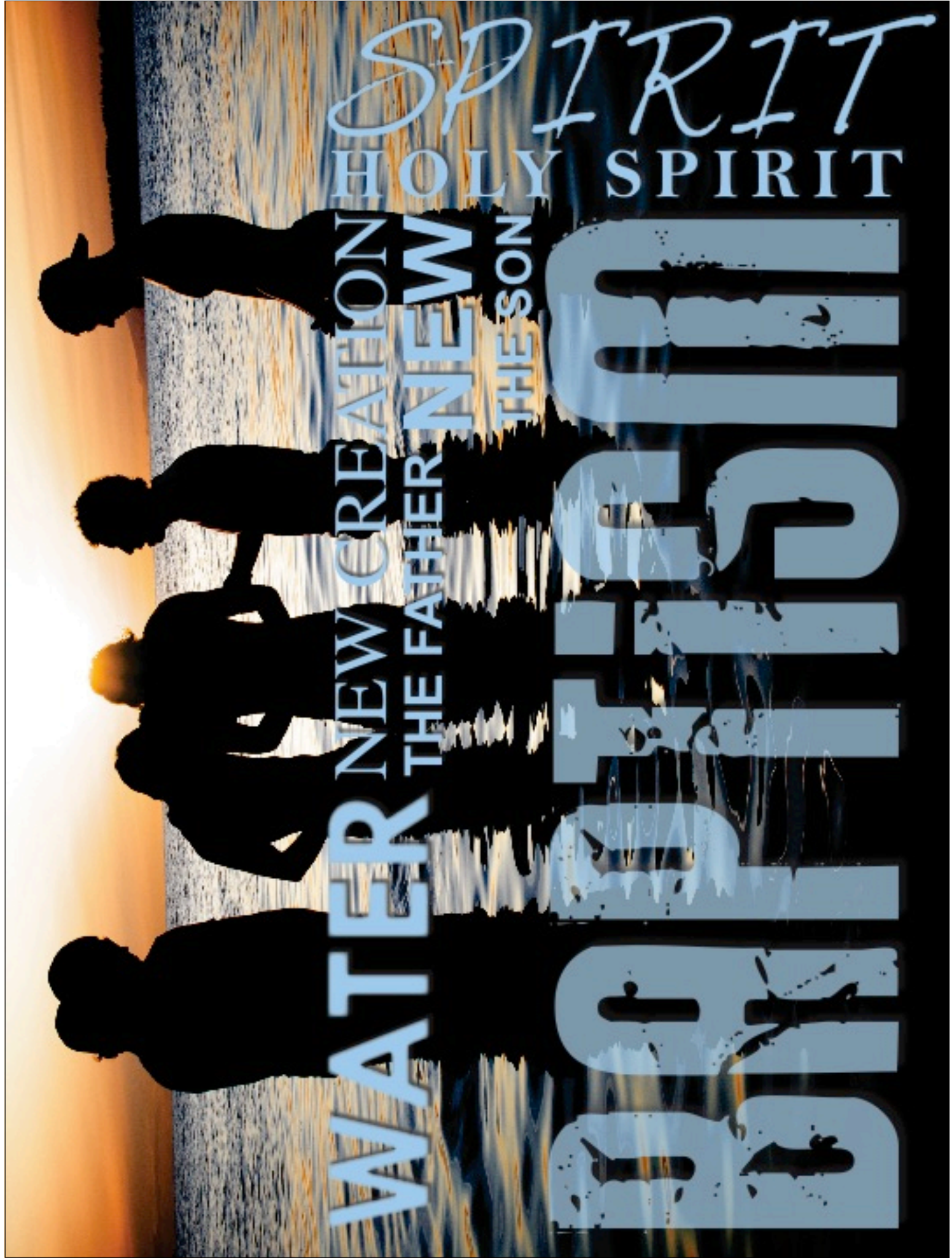
**U.S. Olympic
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SPIRIT
HOLY SPIRIT

NEW CREATION
THE FATHER NEW
THE SON

WATER

BAPTISM



QUALITY

