

If you were asked: “How does someone become a follower of Jesus Christ?” what would you tell them? If you aren’t exactly sure, then today is your day. That’s the question Peter was asked when he finished preaching his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. Whether that question comes from a family member, a friend or a co-worker, Peter’s going to help us answer it. And, he’s going to coach us on living every day, with something we already have, that connects us directly to the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Peter’s answer isn’t long and drawn out. He keeps it short and sweet: **Repent and be baptized!** Repentance is admitting something I’d rather not admit: “I’m a sinner.” Not only have I said, thought and done wrong things, it’s part of my DNA. Repentance is admitting I’m headed in the wrong direction.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring about an honest confession of sin along with the strength to head in the right direction. A spiritual U-turn is the Bible’s word picture for repentance.

Repent and be baptized! But I’ve already been baptized. True, and I’ve seen tears in the eyes of more aging Christians than I can count when hearing again the news of their Baptism. It’s amazing how what took place in the first days of a Christian’s life can be so reassuring and so comforting during their final days. It proves **My Baptism Still Matters!**

Miraculous and amazing things happened when you were baptized.

- Plain water when combined with God’s Word drowned the rebel inside you.
- Your heavenly Father adopted you as his own children.
- Your Good Shepherd welcomed you into his flock.
- Your heart became the home for the Holy Spirit.

There are things in life that are important to us, even if we don’t know everything about how it works. If dashboard warning lights in your car went on, would you know how to fix it? Your car is

important, but you don’t know everything about how it works.

How about your computer? If your computer suddenly shuts down, would you know how to fix it? Cars and computers are important to you, but you don’t know everything about how they work.

How about your Baptism? According to the Bible, Baptism is essential: **Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved.** Baptism, along with faith is necessary for salvation. Baptism is important to you, even though you don’t know everything about how it works.

Why do I need it? If I was baptized 10 years ago, or 60 years ago, what difference does it make today? Is it possible to lose the blessings of my baptism? We’ll search for these answers, and more, so you’ll be able to can say and mean it: **My Baptism Still Matters!**

Let’s start with: **Why do I need baptism?** Why should I care if I’m not baptized, or if my child is baptized? Psalm 51:5 leaves no doubt: **Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.** You and I were sinful at birth. Actually, this passage tells us to stop and back it up 9 months prior, when our lives began. Being conceived by sinful parents makes us sinful.

That might be hard to swallow, but it is still true. No matter how cute and cuddly a baby looks in our eyes, in God’s eyes they’re his spiritually blind enemy, who’s dead in sins. Every child inherits that sin from their parents. That’s why God sees only a tiny bundle of sin.

Baptism fixes the sin-problem. Why do you think your parents and godparents were so honored, so excited and so eager to have you baptized? Baptism forgives sins. Baptism made you, once dead in your sins, alive in Christ. Yes, **My Baptism Still Matters!**

Which leads to this question: **What blessings do I receive through my baptism?** Peter answers: **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.**

Do you see what God delivered when water was applied along with Jesus' words: **I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?** Something so special it's a miracle. It's exactly what every child needs. A child needs forgiveness because every child carries with them original sin.

In addition to forgiveness, there's another blessing you receive in baptism: **You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. He's responsible for giving you THE GIFT. There's only one thing so important it could be called THE GIFT. That is faith! Only the Holy Spirit can plant faith in a person's heart. Only that same Spirit can preserve faith planted in a believer's heart.

When you watch a child getting baptized, someone is there you can't see. Besides the parents and the baby, the godparents and the pastor – someone else is there. God tells us his Holy Spirit is there, entering that tiny heart and turning it from God's foe to God's friend. **My Baptism Still Matters** because of the blessings of faith, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit!

Next question: ***Who needs to be baptized?*** **The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.**

The Sacrament of Holy Communion is intended for those who have already spent time with Jesus and know him and his Word. Just like his disciples, who spent 3 years together with him. It's intended to strengthen the faith already planted in a believer's heart.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is different. God commands this is for all nations, including **you and your children.** He wants everyone, including babies, to receive faith and forgiveness through Baptism. Everyone is sinful, even babies. That means everyone needs forgiveness, even babies. God doesn't want anyone to miss out on these good things, so everyone can say: **My Baptism Still Matters!**

And our final question ... ***What about those already baptized?*** - Are you living your baptism, or

are you throwing it away along with the blessings? Can you still say: **My Baptism Still Matters?**

John the Baptist was the first to do what Peter did here, call people to repent and be baptized. He also wanted them to see their baptism as more than a one-and-done event by: ***Producing fruit in keeping with repentance.*** John was talking to people who figured: *"OK, I've been baptized, I'm good."* But they weren't good. They weren't producing fruit, or evidence in a believer's life that faith is alive in their heart. No fruit was evidence they were throwing away their baptism and its blessings.

How about you? Are you throwing away the forgiveness and faith and the Spirit God gave you when you were baptized?

- Are you producing fruit every day in your speech and actions, or is that a rare and unusual occurrence?
- Is the Word of God and the House of God a priority in your life, or just something when you've got nothing better to do?

What a tragedy when a baby is baptized, and that seems to officially mark both the beginning and the end of a parents' responsibility to the faith of that child. No Bible songs! No Bible stories! No Sunday School, Vacation Bible School or Lutheran Elementary School in that child's future. No sitting between dad and mom in church. It started with faith in Jesus, but not much, if anything, was done to grow it.

What about you? You have a sinful world around you and a sinful nature inside of you that tries to unplug you from the blessings of your baptism. They never get tired of telling you in creative ways how unimportant it is to read God's Word or be in God's House.

If you've pushed God's blessings of faith, forgiveness and his Spirit out of your life, repent. No, you don't need to be re-baptized. God never changed his mind about loving you. He forgives you. When you say: **My Baptism Still Matters,** that's powerful proof of the faith God has planted in you to walk in his ways.