

Aim of lesson

To help the young people to recognise how they should feel before asking for baptism and understanding the change in their situation when they are.

Bible background

1 Peter 3:18-22

Preparation required

Read through the notes and the worksheet and try to anticipate the answers your class might give to the questions. Think how you would guide the discussion so that you would help them to realise the seriousness of the subject but also the joys of a life in Christ.

Suggested outline of lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to help the young people to understand the difference between an academic understanding of what the Bible says and the 'calling' to follow Jesus. Explain to them that knowing what baptism means, which they now do having done lesson 25, is important but they have to feel the need and want it for themselves before they go any further.

Before baptism

Ask for suggestions for answers to the first questions in the students' notes. They may need a suggestion from you to get the idea. Make a list and then discuss whether these are good reasons. There will not be right or wrong answers so they might like to give each reason a score out of 5. Having to do this will make them really think about it. The sort of suggestions you might have are:

- Because my friends are baptised - good that you want to mix with people who believe the same as you - but it must be a personal decision.
- My parents expect me to - good for families to be united but it must be a personal decision.
- I was nearly killed the other day and it made me worry about the future - good so long as you understand all the implications.
- The Bible tells me to - good so long as you really want to follow Jesus. There are many who understand what the Bible says but have no desire to act on it.
- I feel bad about all the things I do wrong and want to be forgiven - good.

As you discuss their suggestions encourage them to understand that the importance of a real desire to follow Jesus on their part is the most important thing.

If you have not had suggestions like these you might like to add them to the list:

- I know God loves me and I want to do it for him.
- I am really glad Jesus died for me because I know I have no hope otherwise.

Follow a similar pattern with the second question. The sort of problem they might suggest could be:

- Am I old enough?
- Do I know enough?
- Am I good enough?

In discussing these questions help them to realise that a certain amount of knowledge is necessary to fully understand what you are doing; age could be critical if someone was not mature enough to live up to following Jesus as they might be when they are older; no-one is good enough - this is the whole point. Get them to write a brief answer to the questions they pose after discussion.

At baptism

Make sure the group know what happens at a Christadelphian baptism. The time that you spend discussing it will depend on your class. If they have questions about why we do things the way we do, use this time to answer them. You may like to ask them questions like this.

After baptism.

Discuss with the class what they think the result of baptism should be. List them and discuss them. Possible answers might be:

- Their sins are forgiven.
- They have now got to try to be like Jesus.
- There is no difference. It's just like going swimming.

Through discussion help them to see that they still have the same nature and will still go on sinning. The difference now is that they now have a new relationship with God and a righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus, Romans 3:21-24.

Relevance to our lives

It can sometimes be a shock after baptism to discover it is just as difficult to be 'good'. This lesson should put that into perspective. Also knowing what is expected of them should help them to know when they should make this most important step of their lives.

Prayer

Encourage the young people to pray as did the boy's father in Mark 9:23-24, "I do believe, help me to overcome my unbelief".

Other suggestions for activities

- It may be helpful if you could arrange a visit to a baptism, even if the young people have attended one previously.
- The young people could write a letter to a friend explaining why they might wish to be baptised or write an imaginary dialogue between themselves and someone at work or school who might think it a silly idea.