

Session 7: Buried with Him in Baptism

Romans 6 · Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers where the real righteousness of chapter 5 arrives in an individual life: Baptism, in which we were buried with Christ into his death and raised to walk in newness of life. Because that union is real, sin's dominion is broken, the old self is crucified, and the Christian life is living out a death and resurrection that have already happened to us.

Catholic Touchstone. Baptismal regeneration is not a Catholic addition to the gospel; it is Romans 6 read at face value. The Catechism's teaching that Baptism buries us into Christ's death and raises us as a new creation (CCC 1214, 1227, 1265) is this chapter restated. Tonight also pays off a thread three sessions old: the circumcision of the heart God promised (Deut 30:6) can be given an address, and Colossians 2 supplies it.

What You Need to Know

Chapter 6 opens with the objection grace always attracts: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (6:1). If where sin increased grace superabounded (5:20), why not sin boldly and let grace shine? Paul's answer is not a rule but a fact about the audience: "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:2). You died. When? His proof assumes the Romans already know: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (6:3-4). Weigh the grammar with your group: buried with him by baptism, the grammar most naturally making baptism the instrument, not a bare illustration. And weigh the argument's structure: Paul settles a moral controversy by appealing to what baptism did. A ceremony that merely pictured an inner event could not carry that load; only an event can.

The chapter then runs on two rails your group should learn to name: the indicative and the imperative, what is already true and what must therefore be done. Indicative: united with him in a death like his (6:5), our old self crucified (6:6), death no longer has dominion over Christ (6:9), and "sin will have no dominion over you" (6:14). Imperative: "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God" (6:11), "let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies" (6:12), "yield yourselves to God" (6:13). The order is everything and it is the gospel's order: become what you are. Not "behave so that God will accept you" but "you have been buried and raised; now live like it." The reign vocabulary planted last session pays off here: someone will reign in your body, sin or grace; the baptized have changed kingdoms, and 6:16-23 presses the slavery image to its stark conclusion: everyone serves somebody; the only question is which master, and the wage scales differ infinitely: "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23).

One sentence in the chapter belongs to this study's spine. Paul thanks God that the Romans "have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed" (6:17). Obedient from the heart: the obedience of faith (1:5) and the circumcised heart (2:29; Deut 30:6) meet in a single phrase, and tonight's second discovery will show the group where God performs that surgery. Let them find it; it is one of the study's best moments.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Ezekiel 36:25-27. The prophetic blueprint behind the font: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you... And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Water, new heart, indwelling Spirit, resulting obedience: Romans 6 (and 8) in prophetic form. A discovery passage; keep it back.

Colossians 2:11-12. The thread payoff. Paul elsewhere names Baptism as the place of the heart's circumcision: "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands... and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God" (Col 2:11-12). Deuteronomy promised God would circumcise hearts (Deut 30:6, found in Session 3); Colossians gives the where and when. Guard this discovery jealously; it is the session's summit.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Catechizing the newly baptized in the fourth century, steps from the empty tomb itself, St. Cyril told them what had just happened in the font: in the same moment you were dying and being born, and that saving water was at once your grave and your mother, in image the dying and in truth the salvation (Mystagogical Catecheses 2). He learned the pairing from tonight's chapter, which he expounds in that very lecture: buried with Christ, raised with Christ, the font a tomb with an exit. Few Fathers state the realism of Romans 6 more vividly: a true dying-with, given through the likeness.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

"Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift" (Oration 40, quoted at CCC 1216). St. Gregory piles up the names because no single one holds it: each title names a real effect. A gift can be forgotten in a drawer; part of tonight's aim is that everyone leave wanting to find the date of their own Baptism and keep it like a birthday, because by this chapter's logic it is one.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN

St. Ambrose, instructing the newly baptized of Milan (the catecheses handed down as *On the Sacraments* and *On the Mysteries*), teaches in substance that what the eyes saw at the font, water, oil, white garments, was the least of what happened there: the visible washing was the instrument of an invisible work of the whole Trinity, forgiving sin, killing the old self, and raising a new one. He insists the newly baptized not judge the mystery by what they saw, since the things unseen are greater than the things seen. It is the exact answer to the modern shrug that baptism is "just a symbol": St. Ambrose agrees the water of itself is ordinary; the power was never in the element but in the word and work of Christ.

Catechism Connection

CCC 1214. The name itself teaches: to baptize (*baptizein*) means to plunge or immerse; the plunge into the water symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises by resurrection with him as

"a new creature." The Catechism's first definition of Baptism is simply Romans 6:4 with a Greek lesson attached.

CCC 1227. Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Christ: baptized into his death, buried with him, raised with him. The paragraph builds directly on Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12, tonight's two central texts.

CCC 1265. What the font effects: Baptism "not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creation,' an adopted son of God," partaker of the divine nature, member of Christ, co-heir, temple of the Holy Spirit. Read the list aloud slowly; most cradle Catholics have never heard what happened to them.

CCC 1257 (leader's reference for the honest edge): "God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments." If the question of the unbaptized arises, this is the Church's own careful answer: the sacrament is the covenanted way, and God's mercy is not caged by it.

THREAD WATCH (LEADER ONLY)

Heart-circumcision thread: RESOLVES tonight. Deut 30:6 (planted Session 3) finds its address in Col 2:11-12. When the group makes the connection, let them say it, not you; then confirm it plainly. This is the study's first full thread payoff and a preview of how Session 15 will feel.

Reign and dominion: resolves. "Under the power of sin" (3:9) and death's reign (5:14, 17) meet their end at 6:14, "sin will have no dominion over you." Name the arc once.

Title thread. 6:17, "obedient from the heart," is the closest the letter has yet come to saying its first phrase again. Do not point at the inclusio; underline the phrase and move on.

SEALED GUESS OPENS NEXT SESSION. Take-Home 7 carries the reminder in print: everyone brings their sealed My Guess sheet to Session 8. Message anyone absent tonight. The opening ritual comes first thing next session, before any new material.

Session Goals

1. The group can answer 6:1 the way Paul does: from the fact of a death that has already happened to the baptized.
2. The group discovers Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Colossians 2:11-12, and connects the font to the promised circumcision of the heart from Session 3.
3. The group can distinguish indicative from imperative in the chapter and explain "become what you are."
4. Each participant leaves intending to find and mark the date of their own Baptism.

Timed Plan (75-90 minutes)

- Opening prayer and Win questions: 12 min
- Build questions 1-2 with the Ezekiel discovery: 25 min
- Build question 3 with the Colossians discovery (thread payoff): 20 min
- Steelman chain: 15 min
- Send questions, Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer: 15 min

If time runs short, pre-chosen cuts: drop the Dig Deeper box, and compress the slavery discussion (6:15-23) to the single contrast of 6:23. Never cut the Colossians discovery or the steelman answer.

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Romans 6 · Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Father, in the waters of Baptism you buried us with your Son and raised us with him. What you did there, we barely understand and mostly forget. Tonight, give us back the memory of our own graves and the shock of our own rising, and teach us to walk in the newness you already gave. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win

1. Do you know the date of your own Baptism? Has anyone ever celebrated it? What do you actually know about that day?
2. Tell us about a time a change of status changed your behavior: a new job, marriage, becoming a parent, citizenship. What did the new identity make unthinkable?

Build

Read Romans 6:1-4 aloud, twice.

1. What objection is Paul answering in 6:1, and why is it a compliment to everything he has taught so far? Then look hard at his answer in 6:2-4: what fact does he appeal to, and what does the phrase "by baptism" (6:4) make baptism, grammatically?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The objection, "continue in sin that grace may abound?", only arises if grace has been preached at full, scandalous strength; a gospel that never provokes this question has been domesticated. Paul's answer is not a warning but a biography: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:2). The death he means has a date and a place: "baptized into his death... buried therefore with him by baptism into death" (6:3-4). Grammatically, baptism is the instrument, the means by which the burial happened, not a later illustration of it. And notice "Do you not know": Paul treats this as baseline Christian knowledge he can build a moral argument on, in a church he has never visited. Baptism doing something real was the common faith of the apostolic churches, not one region's opinion.

Discovery moment. Say: "Water that cleanses, a new heart, God's own Spirit put inside, and a life that finally walks in his ways: centuries before the first Christian font, a prophet in exile heard God promise exactly that sequence. Find it; he is the prophet of the dry bones, and the promise comes one chapter before that vision."

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Ezekiel 36:25-27: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Lay the sequence beside Romans 6: water, cleansing, new interior life, resulting obedience ("walk" in both texts: Ezek 36:27, Rom 6:4). The font did not appear from nowhere; as the Church has always read these prophecies, it is a promise being kept. And note where the obedience comes in the sequence: last, caused,

flowing from the Spirit put within. God does not demand a new life and then wash us if we manage it; he washes, implants, and the walking follows.

2. Read 6:5-14. Sort the sentences into two piles: things that are already true of the baptized, and things we are told to do. Which pile comes first, and why does the order matter? What changes at 6:11 from knowing to doing?

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Already true: united with him in a death like his (6:5); our old self was crucified (6:6); death has no more dominion over Christ (6:9); sin will have no dominion over you (6:14). Commanded: consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God (6:11); let not sin reign in your mortal bodies (6:12); yield your members to God as instruments of righteousness (6:13). The indicative funds the imperative: become what you are. Get the order backwards and you get exhausting religion (perform so as to be accepted); get it right and you get the Christian life (you were buried and raised; now live like it). And 6:11's "consider" is not pretending: it is accounting, reckoning with a fact, the same bookkeeping word as 4:3. Faith's daily work is believing your own baptism.

Discovery moment: the thread payoff. Say: "In Session 3 we found Moses' promise that God himself would one day circumcise hearts (Deut 30:6), and we asked: where and when does God perform that surgery? Paul answers in another letter, in one sentence that contains both a circumcision 'made without hands' and tonight's exact phrase, 'buried with him.' Find it in Colossians 2."

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Colossians 2:11-12: "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." There it is: the circumcision of the heart, performed by no human hand, located at Baptism. The promise chain your group has assembled across five weeks now closes: Deuteronomy 30:6 (God will circumcise your heart) through Romans 2:29 (real circumcision is of the heart, by the Spirit) to Colossians 2:11-12 (it happened to you, at the font). Let the group say it before you do. And point out the last clause: "through faith in the working of God." Baptism and faith are not competitors; the sacrament is God's embrace of faith, which is why the Church calls Baptism the sacrament of faith: adults bring personal faith, and infants are baptized within the faith of the Church.

Steelman: Just a Symbol?

Build it at full strength. Say to the group: "Here is the believer's-baptism reading, held by devout Baptist and evangelical friends, and it deserves its best form. Baptism is an ordinance, not a sacrament: an outward, public testimony of an inward salvation already complete through faith alone. Romans 6 describes what baptism pictures, burial and resurrection, not what it performs; the drama is real, the water is scenery. And this reading has a real concern behind it: nothing must compete with Christ's finished work, and history is full of people trusting rituals instead of the Redeemer. Doesn't attributing power to water risk exactly the mechanical religion Paul spent three chapters demolishing?" Honor the concern out loud; it is a godly one. And give the position its strongest form: ordinances obey Christ without mediating grace precisely to keep faith's object God alone and grace unmixed with rites. Then press.

3. Press: Test the symbol reading against three details the group has already seen tonight: the grammar of 6:3-4, the structure of Paul's argument against sin, and the last clause of Colossians 2:12. Then hear one more witness: find 1 Peter 3:21 and read it aloud.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The grammar: "buried with him by baptism" (6:4) most naturally makes baptism the means, and "baptized into his death" (6:3) the destination; symbols point at things, they do not put you into them. The argument: Paul refutes "shall we sin?" by appealing to what baptism did to the Romans; if it only pictured a private prior event, the argument collapses, since a picture forbids nothing. Colossians 2:12 answers the worthy concern directly: raised "through faith in the working of God": the working is God's, received through faith; no one is trusting water, and the Church has never taught magic (an adult who withholds faith places an obstacle: the water is received without its fruit until faith opens it). And 1 Peter 3:21 says the sentence a pure symbolist cannot: "Baptism... now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Peter even anticipates the objection: not the dirt-washing, the resurrection working through it. Honest edges, stated plainly: God's grace is not caged by his sacraments (CCC 1257), and the baptized can still gravely sin, which is why 6:12-13 gives commands and why the chapter ends at 6:23 with two masters still recruiting. The font is a beginning, not an exemption; what it begins, the rest of the letter trains.

DIG DEEPER

Whose slave, then? Modern people believe in a third option: serving no one. Paul denies it exists: "you are slaves of the one whom you obey" (6:16), sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness. Everyone's life is organized around some master; the deepest liberty available to creatures is choosing the good Master whose service is freedom (the Church calls this filial freedom). And the economics differ at the root: sin pays wages (6:23), earned, owed, exact; God gives a free gift. One master pays you what you deserve; the other gives you what he deserves. "Obedient from the heart" (6:17) names the sweet spot the whole study has circled: service that is freedom because the heart itself has been remade to love what it obeys.

Send

1. Most of us were baptized long ago and live as if it were a certificate, not a grave and a birth. What would this week look like if you believed your baptism the way you believe your birthday?
2. Where is sin still reigning in your mortal body (6:12): the habit, screen, substance, or resentment that still gives orders? What would "yielding your members to God" (6:13) mean there, concretely?

Live It This Week

- Find the date of your Baptism this week (ask family or call the parish of record). Write it down, and plan to mark it yearly.
- Each time you bless yourself with holy water this week, pause two seconds and say: I am baptized; I died and rose with Christ.
- Pick the one place sin still reigns that you named tonight, and take one concrete step of "yielding" there this week: remove the occasion, tell a trusted friend, or bring it to Confession.

- BRING YOUR SEALED MY GUESS SHEET NEXT WEEK. It opens at the start of Session 8.

Memory Verse

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Romans 6:4 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we were buried with you, and we forgot; we were raised with you, and we walked back toward our graves. Tonight we remember. Reign where sin reigned; take the members we yield; finish in us what the font began. We are baptized: teach us to live like it. Amen.

Session 7: Buried with Him in Baptism

Leader Reference Card · Every Passage, In Order

- Romans 6:1-4 (read aloud twice: continue in sin?; buried with him by baptism; newness of life)
- Ezekiel 36:25-27 (discovery passage: water, new heart, Spirit within, walking in his statutes; do not reveal in advance)
- Romans 6:5-14 (indicative and imperative; consider yourselves dead to sin; no dominion)
- Colossians 2:11-12 (discovery passage, thread payoff: circumcision made without hands, buried in baptism; do not reveal in advance; cf. Deut 30:6, Rom 2:29)
- Romans 6:15-23 (slavery to sin or to obedience; obedient from the heart; wages versus free gift)
- 1 Peter 3:21 (steelman discovery: Baptism now saves you; do not reveal in advance)
- CCC 1214, 1227, 1265 (Catechism Connection); CCC 1257 (leader's reference)
- Memory verse: Romans 6:4