

THE FOREST HILL NEWS

Published weekly by the Forest Hill church of Christ

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.FORESTHILLCHURCH.ORG

FOREST HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST

3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd.
Memphis, TN 38125

Office: (901) 751-2444
Fax: (901) 751-9711
Info Line: (901) 392-2449

Elders:

Anthony D. Callahan
Floyd M. Hayes
Harold D. Mangrum
Leonard Watson

Minister:

Barry M. Grider

VISIT US SOON!

Sunday:

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.
Morning Worship.. ...10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study7:00 P.M.

HOME OF MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING

Missions Supported:

Memphis Hispanic Ministry
Kakinada, India
Manila, Philippines
Murmansk, Russia
Far East/World Evangelism
In Search of the Lord's Way

Volume 32

FEBRUARY 3, 2004

Number 05

Must I Baptize All Who Desire To Be Baptized?

Barry M. Grider

Nothing brings more joy to a soul winner than to see individuals baptized into Christ. It is especially delightful to study with someone and then lead that person down into the watery grave as Phillip did the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38). Genuine New Testament Christians consider baptism to be a sacred act. Why? *First*, Jesus commands baptism and states its purpose. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). *Second*, throughout the Book of Acts (the book of conversions), the Bible student should clearly see the connection between baptism and forgiveness.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And thy said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway (Acts 16:30-33).

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

Third, the Bible is clear regarding what happens when one is scripturally baptized.

- a. He is forgiven of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- b. He contacts the blood (Rom. 6:3,4).
- c. He is placed in Christ (Gal. 3:27), wherein he finds salvation (2 Tim. 2:10).
- d. He enters the church (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13).
- e. He is saved (1 Pet. 3:21).

Fourth, as one studies the New Testament, he learns that it matters what one believes concerning baptism (Rom. 6:17). For example, scriptural baptism is immersion in water (John 3:23; Acts 8:38; Rom. 6:3,4). Also, one realizes that baptism alone does not save. Just because an individual must be baptized to obtain the forgiveness of sins, this in no way negates the grace of God. Rather, through baptism one appropriates God's grace. Furthermore, by following the previous examples, for baptism to be scriptural, it is necessitated upon hearing the word (Acts 16:32; Rom. 10:17); belief (Mark 16:16); repentance (Acts 2:38); and confession of Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10).

Now consider the question in the title of the article, "Must I baptize all who desire to be baptized?" While we yearn to baptize more into Christ, we must be

careful not to rush someone to the baptistery who is not ready to be baptized. It is not advantageous to a person's soul, just to get him wet. Occasionally, I have had a few people who I had never previously met, come to me and ask to be baptized. My first response, "let's talk." Such a person may or may not be ready to be baptized. If a person has never heard the gospel, should I baptize that person anyway? If a person does not believe in Christ and refuses to confess Him as the Son of God, should I baptize that person just because he desires me to do so? Obviously, the answer is no. What about repentance? If a drunkard desires to be baptized, yet he admits he is not going to quit drinking, must I baptize him? About a year ago I challenged a preacher/elder who had baptized a woman that is in an unscriptural marriage and thus is living in adultery. The "husband" in this "marriage," an erring brother in Christ, admits the relationship is unscriptural (he admits he did not have the right to marry this woman per Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:9). I asked this preacher/elder who was very well aware of the situation, if he enquired about the unscriptural marriage when the woman requested to be baptized. Sadly, he did not. His response, "I could not refuse to baptize her." My response, "would you refuse baptism to one who would not confess Christ?" He said he would refuse the person who would not confess Christ. Why refuse to baptize one who will not confess Christ, yet baptize one who openly is refusing to repent? Obviously, one cannot look into a person's heart and know if a person is genuinely penitent. However, the facts in the aforementioned scenario were well known, and therefore the preacher had the responsibility of not only enquiring about the unscriptural marriage, but refusing to baptize the person until she repented (dissolved the adulterous union), as well.

Eventually, this preacher/elder admitted he believed the woman was forgiven of all sins when she was baptized and is now in a saved condition. Evidently he now subscribes to the fatal error that baptism magically makes unscriptural marriages right in the sight of God. And what about the "husband" in this situation? He was a member of the church when he entered into this sinful relationship. Is he now forgiven because of her baptism? Is the relationship unscriptural for him and not for her? Such conclusions are absurd.

Friends, all this preacher/elder did was

make some people feel comfortable in their sins. He responded to me by saying, "I would not want to stand before Christ having refused to baptize someone." My response, "I would not want to stand before Christ having made a mockery out of baptism which is a re-enactment of the Lord's death and resurrection." Baptism is for scriptural subjects. It is for **penitent** believers who confess Christ as God's Son. It is a great joy to baptize these souls into Christ. However, for those who refuse to submit to God's terms, it is a different matter. Must I baptize all who desire to be baptized? I must not and I will not!

Does Baptism Sanctify an Unscriptural Relationship?

Neil Richey

The scenario is this—a man and a woman marry (both having never been married before). Neither is a Christian. After several years, the same man and woman decide to divorce (fornication is not the cause). They have clearly violated Matthew 5:32. Now suppose that the man marries again, and he is now, out of ignorance living in adultery (cf. Matt. 19:9). While in this relationship he is taught how to become a Christian. He is therefore baptized for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38). Question, did his baptism sanctify (make right) his relationship with his new wife?

1. Baptism never makes a sinful act a righteous act. If it was adultery before he became a Christian, it remains adultery after he becomes a Christian. I read about a preacher and elder who went to talk to the husband of one of the members about becoming a Christian. After sitting down and studying the Bible together, the man asked the elder and preacher to follow him into the woods. They came upon a moonshine still. The man asked, "Can I continue to operate this still and be a Christian?" When he was told that he could not, he began chopping the still into pieces. He then said, "I am ready to become a Christian." We know that one cannot be a Christian and continue to operate a moonshine still. But, do we also know that one cannot be a Christian and continue to live in adultery?

2. Baptism never sanctifies an unscriptural relationship. Suppose that two men are living together in a homosexual relationship. They hear the

gospel and desire to become Christians. Would baptism make their relationship right? Would they then have the right to continue to live in that relationship after being baptized for the forgiveness of sin? We understand that baptism does not sanctify the unscriptural relationship of a homosexual couple (1 Cor. 6:9), but do we also know that baptism does not sanctify a marriage relationship that is adulterous?

In a study such as this, the question arises, "Can one who is in an unscriptural marriage not obtain forgiveness for his sins?" Without question, he can. Anyone who chooses to submit his will to God's may have God's pardon. But, without meeting God's terms there is never pardon, and one of those terms is repentance (Luke 13:3). To repent means "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins" (Thayer). In other words, when one repents, he decides that he will not continue in sin. For instance, he who was making moonshine will no longer make it. He who committed sins of a homosexual nature will not do that anymore. Likewise, he that is living in adultery will not live in adultery any longer.

(Greenville, South Carolina)

THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE

The divorce rate in America is now around 50%. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause?" "Not so," said the Lord. What happens that changes those moments of starry-eyed splendor into unconcern and apathetic feelings? Consider these observations:

1. He married her because, among other things, her hair looked so beautiful. He divorced her because she spent so much time fixing her hair.
2. He married her because she was such an adept conversationalist. He divorced her because she talked all the time.
3. She married him because he enjoyed her home cooking. She divorced him because he never took her out to eat.
4. She married him because he was a "real sport". She divorced him because he refused to give up his "sport".
5. He married her because their families shared a common background. He divorced her because her family interfered in their affairs.
6. She married him because he was so attentive to little things. She divorced him because he was oblivious to important things.

An ideal marriage is not one in which people marry to be happy, but to make the other happy. This means to give as well as take; to forget as well as to remember, to love as well as to be loved.

**PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
MEMPHIS, TN**

The Forest Hill News (USPS #018-150) is published weekly by the Forest Hill Church of Christ, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Road, Memphis, TN 38125-2585. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Forest Hill News, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd., Memphis, TN 38125-2585.