



# kindergarten - 2nd grade

## BAPTISM

Jesus' ministry on earth was bookended with the practice of baptism - first with his own baptism in the River Jordan (Matthew 9:13-17) and then with his final instructions to the disciples to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). For nearly 2,000 years, followers of Jesus have practiced the ritual of baptism, and over that time, churches have developed different ways of performing and understanding baptism (immersion vs. sprinkling, believer vs. infant and so on). Yet all agree that baptism marks an important entry point into the life of faith and the community of believers. Here are a few ways to think about what baptism represents.

**Baptism as Promise.** There are many important promises made during a baptism: the parents' promise to raise their child in a Christian environment, the congregation's promise to nurture both child and family in love, and the promise of the individual (if he or she is old enough) to follow God as a faithful member of the church. Of all the promises made, the one that is most important is God's - through Jesus, we are adopted as God's children, forgiven of our sins, and sealed in God's grace. We can trust that God will fulfill what God has promised to do.

**Baptism as Grace.** The Greek word for grace is *charis*, which means "gift." God's love and forgiveness are things we cannot earn; they are freely given to us by our Creator. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church,

described something he called *prevenient grace* - grace that *comes before* our profession of faith. God's grace doesn't simply start at that moment when we confess our faith in Christ and pledge our lives to Him. Rather, our profession of faith is actually a response to God's goodness. In baptizing children, we affirm that God's love for them began "before the foundations of the world were laid" (Eph 1:9), and we believe that God will continue to work in their lives to help them understand and respond to that love as they grow.

**Baptism as Identity.** When Jesus was baptized, scriptures say that the heavens opened and a dove descended upon Him, and a voice declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased!" We often forget the importance of that declaration. Everything that Jesus did - whether teaching the crowds, healing the sick or even dying on a cross - came from that identity.

We all tend to draw our identity from something - from our gifts and abilities, from our achievements or possessions, or from others' opinions of us. When we baptize a child (or an adult), we claim a new identity for them, one that is grounded in God's love instead of our performance. Moreover, we include them in a community of people who bear the same identity and are seeking to live out God's love within the world. Like Christ, we belong to God and are beloved in His sight. When children grow up seeing themselves in the light of God's love, great things are possible!

# dove mobile

## ADVANCED PREPARATION:

- Gather an embroidery hoop, 10 pieces of thread or yarn (cut into varying lengths), a hole puncher, and 10 doves (provided)
- Have your Bible marked to Mark 1:9-11 and John 1:32-34

### Step #1: Read the Bible Story

Read Mark 1:9-11 with your child and discuss the following questions:

- What is the Holy Spirit in this story? Why did it look like a dove? Why do you think the dove was important? *(Hint: Look at John 1:32-34 also.)*
- What did Jesus hear God say? How do you think it made Jesus feel to hear those words from God?
- When have you experienced someone “claiming” you or saying something good about you in front of others? How does it make you feel?

### Step #2: What pleases God about us?

Lay out the doves and on each write down one of the words that God spoke to Jesus: You, are, my, beloved, child, you, bring, me, great, joy. (That’s the NLT translation. If you want to use another translation you can adjust the number of doves needed.)

After the verse has been written, flip the doves over and write on each one a quality of your child that brings you great joy as a parent - something that makes them special and unique.

### Step #3: Putting it together

Punch a hole in each dove and tie a separate thread through each hole. Attach the thread to the embroidery hoop, spacing each piece of twine evenly. Arrange the lengths of thread so that they ascend in height from longest to shortest, this will create a spiral-like appearance.

Hang the finished mobile in your child’s room as a reminder that they, like Jesus, are special and dearly loved.