

A close-up photograph of a person's legs from the knees down, wearing dark blue or black leggings and maroon sneakers with white soles. The person is stepping on a ground covered with dry, golden-brown autumn leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Where the Soul Meets the Sole

NINA HELTERBRAND

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Women Walking with God

By Nina Helterbrand

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Chapter 1

Baptized, Now Where Am I?

When we tell a story, we usually start at the beginning. We find the beginning of the church in Acts chapter 2. The Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles with the sound of a mighty wind and tongues like fire that sits upon each apostle. It is the Day of Pentecost, and many Jews from many places are in Jerusalem. The sound of that wind causes people to hurry to where the apostles gather to see what is happening. Acts 2:5 says there were “Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” present at the time of this event. The apostles were from Galilee, yet each Jew heard them in their native language.

Peter begins to speak to the Jews of their history as the chosen people of God and the prophecies they knew about a coming Christ. Peter tells the Jews that the Jesus they crucified fulfilled the prophecies. This Jesus is Lord and Christ.

All the events and intents of the recorded history of mankind and the nation of Israel have come to a crescendo of fulfillment, and a new and better system is in place between God and man. The Mosaic Law is replaced, having served its purpose, and now mankind, beginning here with the Jews, will look to Jesus Christ for authority in their service to God.

The people who listened to Peter were “cut to the heart.” They had a deep emotional response to Peter’s message. That led to a question: *What do we do?* In Acts 2:38–39, Peter tells them, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” In v. 41, “Those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day 3000 souls were added to them.” In v. 47, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

In simplicity and truth, Peter explained who Jesus is to the Jews. He used their familiar prophecies and recent events to teach them. They responded, knowing they needed to do something. Peter said to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and they did what he said to do “that day.” Then the Lord added them to the church. Read 1 Timothy 3:15, Ephesians 2:19–22, and 1 Corinthians 12:12–14. This church that began with the Jews who accepted Christ would soon include all nations. (Galatians 3:8)

Every recorded conversion following this event tells us of baptism immediately following a new believer’s response to the gospel. Every time—whether water was readily available, as in the Ethiopian man’s journey with Phillip, or not as with the conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 8; Acts 16). Nevertheless, many do not give baptism its due respect. Religious leaders may teach baptism as a joining ritual as an action that professes their faith to other people. This teaching is not recorded in the Bible. No “sinner’s prayer” is modeled in Scripture. Everyone who heard Peter in Jerusalem was offered an extraordinary gift from God. Those who received the gift were the ones who accepted the gift by asking Peter what to do and then doing it. The Old Testament story of Naaman the Leper, found in 2 Kings 5:1–17, is sometimes used to illustrate the gift of cleansing from God that is free and unmerited but requires acceptance by humble obedience.

To understand more about baptism, set aside commentaries and the words of men and read the following inspired Scriptures: Romans 6:1–14, Colossians 2:11–14, and 1 Peter 3:18–21. In simplicity and truth, let the Bible speak to the hearts of men and women today.

So, after I am baptized, where am I now? Very simply stated:

- I am in the light. (Colossians 1:13–14)
- I am in the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12–14)
- I am in a loving spiritual family. (1 Peter 1:22; Romans 8:14–17)
- I am in a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:19–22)
- I am in a priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5)
- I am in Christ’s Kingdom. (Colossians 1:12–15)
- I am still physically in this world.

Now, **where** I am spiritually drives **who** I am. Remember, after baptism, I am a new person (Romans 6:4). Before I decided to submit to God and follow

His word, I did what seemed right. Now, I look to the Bible for guidance in my behavior, thoughts, and interactions with others.

I also need to be in a local church that meets regularly to worship God and observe all the acts that we read about in the letters to churches in the New Testament (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1–2; Paul’s letters to the churches). Here, I will receive the support, fellowship, encouragement, teaching, and admonition I need to grow. Here, I will be able to worship God and serve Him and to support, encourage, teach, and admonish my brothers and sisters in Christ (Hebrews 10:21–25; Acts 2:42–47) within my local congregation. I will find my place and people to continue my journey to heaven.



Questions

1. Please share your baptism story. What events led to your baptism?

2. What motivated the Jews in Acts 2 to be baptized?

3. What motivated the Ethiopian man in Acts 8 to be baptized?

4. What motivated the jailer in Acts 16?

5. What motivates people today to be baptized? Can you support those answers with Scripture?

6. What is the purpose of baptism?

7. How am I a light in the world?

8. How am I in the body of Christ?

9. How am I in a spiritual family?

10. How am I in a spiritual house?

11. How am I a priest?

12. How am I in Christ's Kingdom?

13. How is membership in a local church important to my spiritual development?

Chapter 2

Priorities and People

A Christian has priorities that come with citizenship in the Kingdom of Christ. Romans 6 is a lengthy reading, but those 23 verses explain that baptism is a death and a resurrection we experience with Christ. We die to sin, our wisdom, our ideas, and our desires. We rise to live a new life of following the righteousness of God. “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17–18). In Ephesians 2:10, Paul says, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” As a Christian, my priority must be to serve the righteousness of God. This priority will define all the other priorities and commitments in my life. I am a new person in Christ, walking an ancient path of good works that will take me through this modern world to heaven.

How am I to recognize this path? 1 John 2:3–11 tells us, “But whoever keeps His (Jesus’) word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him. By this, we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as He (Jesus) walked.” 2 Timothy 3:15–17 tells us it is in the Scriptures that we find everything we need to be ready for every good work.

The Bible is our map to heaven. We need to study it, and then we need to apply it to our lives. It will be the basis for every decision, thought, and behavior. God’s word will begin to **define** me above and beyond the influence of culture, society, family, and my desires. I transform as I follow God’s path of knowledge and application (Romans 12:2).

When I was baptized, I became washed and clean spiritually. I also became a “babe in Christ” (Hebrews 5:13). I am expected to desire and grow in the

word of God. I am expected to walk in the path of God (2 Peter 3:18). As I study the Bible, I need to be aware that the Old Testament is a recorded history of God and His relationship with our world and mankind. Here, we see the character of God and His desire to be worshiped and obeyed by His people. We read words of wisdom that are timeless and inspired by God. We read of God's promises and His faithfulness in fulfilling those promises. The New Testament's story reveals the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:5-6) It also shows the fulfillment of God's plan to save all from every nation who will come to Him (Hebrews 10). In these books of the Bible, we find the commandments of Jesus and realize the significance of our actions and service to God (1 John 5:1-5).

In the New Testament, we find the pattern of the early church: how and when we assemble and what we should do when we do. This is an important priority. Remember, the church is not a building, society, or club. It is made up of people who are the dwelling place of God. When I choose not to attend, I leave a hole in the wall—a place no one else can fill in my local congregation. Like a brick in a wall, I find support here, and I am support for others. I help accomplish a unity of purpose and worship that God desires.

My brothers and sisters in Christ in my local church are the people God has provided to build me up and encourage me. They are the people He has offered to admonish me and help me grow in Christian characteristics, fruits of the spirit, and knowledge of God. They are my spiritual family, to be treated as brothers and sisters and entreated as mothers and fathers.

The universal church—God's faithful people scattered throughout the nations of the world—is also there for me. As I travel this world or move to follow careers or family goals, I find groups in other places to worship with, and I am encouraged by these people. I prioritize finding them wherever I go because I desire to be with God and His people. These are my people on the path of the knowledge of God that leads to heaven. Being a Christian is not a piece of who I am as a person in this world. It is who I am as I travel through this world daily and in every situation.

In the world, I am to be a light who helps people see life more clearly by pointing them to God and Christ. This is done not by my criticisms and sour disapproval but by my walk with God—pure, patient, godly, and content. I am to be a peacemaker, a good citizen, a kind employer, a dedicated employee. We will cover these things in greater detail in later chapters. I have family, community, and sometimes career responsibilities to those outside of Christ. These are my opportunities to show the world His wisdom and love.

Hopefully, some will want to know my reasons for living how I do, and I will have my answers ready.

I am not to be among these people when they do things that I should flee. Flee means to run away (2 Timothy 2:22; Romans 13:12–14). Will people think we are strange sometimes? 1 Peter 4:1–4 answers, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation.” So, will society sometimes think we are weird? Only if we are doing our jobs as faithful servants of God!

My priorities, my path, and my people all merge and become God’s priorities, God’s path, God’s people, and the lost ones He longs to reconcile with Himself. Ephesians 5 and 6 describe a Christian’s walk of love, light, wisdom, humility, submission, confidence, perseverance, peace, and faith. Complete this lesson by reading through these two chapters. This walk is the journey of a lifetime!



Questions

1. How does John say we can know we are in Christ?

2. Where do we find the good works God has prepared for us in Christ?

3. Write a definition of transformed as it applies to Romans 12:2.

4. When is our transformation complete?

5. What can we learn from the Old Testament?

6. What is the significance of the New Testament in the life of a Christian?

7. What did you find in Ephesians 5 and 6 that speaks to your life today?
