

Rooted: Core Truths, Teacher's Guide

Week 4: Baptism and New Life

Romans 6:3–7

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson lands on one of the clearest and most joyful baptism passages in the New Testament, and a great deal is at stake doctrinally. Romans 6:3–7 teaches that in baptism we are united with Christ in His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. Paul ties baptism directly to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and to our being “set free from sin.” The teacher should be ready to show, gently and clearly, that baptism is not a mere symbol added on after a person is already saved, nor an optional tradition, but the God-appointed moment in which faith is united with the saving death and resurrection of Christ. At the same time, this passage is overwhelmingly positive in tone, and the teacher should keep the lesson joyful. The aim is not mainly to argue against errors but to help students marvel at what God did for them in their baptism and to live in light of it.

This doctrine is also deeply formative, which is exactly how Paul uses it. He does not teach about baptism in the abstract; he reaches back to it to fuel holy living. Because you died with Christ, he reasons, you are now dead to sin; because you were raised with Him, you can walk in newness of life. Many believers carry their baptism as a fading memory and fight sin in their own strength, forgetting the resurrection power they have been joined to. Others are weighed down by an old identity, still defining themselves by their past and their failures. The truth that we have died, been buried, and been raised with Christ speaks directly to both. The teacher's task is to let this doctrine do its forming work, calling students to live out the new life their baptism began.

So aim at both targets. Send students home with a clear, confident understanding of what baptism means and accomplishes, able to explain why it is so much more than a symbol. And send them home with renewed joy and resolve, seeing themselves as raised-up new creations and walking accordingly. The disciple we are forming is one who remembers daily that the old self was left in the water and that the life they now live, they live as a person joined to the risen Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul asks, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (v. 3). What does it mean to be baptized “into Christ” and “into his death,” and why does Paul treat this as the foundation for everything else he says about the Christian life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with Paul's tone of mild surprise: "Do you not know ...?" He assumes that every Christian he is writing to understands the basic meaning of their own baptism. This itself is worth noting. In the New Testament, baptism is not a mystery reserved for the spiritually advanced; it is the common starting point every believer shares, and its meaning was taught from the very beginning.

Focus on the two little phrases that carry the weight: baptized "into Christ Jesus" and "into his death." Baptism is the moment a believer is joined to Christ. Paul says elsewhere that as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27); here he says we were baptized into His death. The saving benefits of the cross, forgiveness, cleansing, union with the Savior, are not received at a distance or by merely thinking about them. In baptism, the believing penitent is brought into contact with the death of Jesus, where those benefits are found.

Help students see why this is the foundation of everything that follows. The whole chapter is Paul's answer to a question: since we are saved by grace, should we just keep on sinning so grace can increase? His answer is an emphatic no, and the reason is baptism. We cannot live comfortably in the very sin we died to. The logic only works because baptism really did join us to Christ's death. If baptism were a mere afterthought, Paul's entire argument for holy living would collapse. Because it actually unites us to Christ, it becomes the ground of a transformed life.

Keep the tone glad, not merely technical. To be "in Christ" is the most wonderful status a human being can have. Everything God has for us, forgiveness, sonship, the Spirit, the inheritance, is found in His Son, and baptism is where we were clothed with Him. The teacher should help students feel that being baptized into Christ is not a hoop they jumped through but a gift they received, the day they were joined to the Savior.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as the moment a believer is united with Christ (Galatians 3:27)
- Baptism "into his death" as contact with the saving benefits of the cross
- The meaning of baptism taught as basic Christian knowledge from the start
- Baptism as the foundation of Paul's argument for holy living
- The blessings of salvation found "in Christ," where baptism places the believer

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be baptized "into Christ" rather than simply to be baptized?
- Why does Paul build his whole argument for holy living on the meaning of baptism?
- How does seeing baptism as union with Christ change the way you think about your own?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul says our “old self was crucified with him ... so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (v. 6). What is one part of your old self, a habit, an attitude, a pattern, that you keep digging back up instead of leaving in the grave? What would it look like to let it stay dead this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the truth of the crucified old self into a practical, personal matter. Paul says our old self was crucified with Christ so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. Yet every honest believer knows the strange tendency to go back to the grave and dig up what was supposed to stay buried. We were set free from a habit or attitude, and then, in a weak moment, we reach back for it.

Help students name one specific thing without shame. The old self shows up in particular ways: a recurring temptation, a bitterness we keep nursing, a pattern of speech, an old comfort we run to under stress. The point is not to produce guilt but to make the battle concrete. We cannot leave “sin in general” in the grave; we leave specific things there, one at a time.

Move toward the encouragement Paul intends. Because the old self really was crucified with Christ, we are not fighting to win a freedom we do not yet have; we are living out a freedom already given. Letting something stay dead may mean removing a temptation’s access, confessing to a trusted brother or sister, or simply refusing, by God’s power, to pick it back up. Ask each student to name one piece of the old self they will leave buried this week, and one practical step to keep it there.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The old self crucified with Christ to free us from slavery to sin
- The tendency to dig back up what was meant to stay buried
- Naming specific patterns rather than fighting “sin in general”
- Living out a freedom already given rather than striving for one not yet ours

Discussion Prompts

- What part of your old self do you keep digging back up?
- Why do we so often return to what God has set us free from?
- What is one practical step to let that thing stay buried this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death” (v. 4). Why does Paul describe baptism as a burial, and what does the picture of going down into the water and being raised up teach us about what God is doing in that moment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul reaches for a vivid image: “we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.” The teacher should let the picture do its work. A burial is what you do with someone who has died. Paul says baptism is a burial, which means it presupposes a death. The old self died with Christ, and baptism is the burial of that crucified self, followed at once by a rising.

This is the place to note, naturally and without heaviness, what the picture itself teaches about the form of baptism. A burial is not a sprinkle of dirt; it is a covering over, a going down and a coming up. Paul’s language of being buried and raised matches the plain meaning of the word baptize, which is to immerse or plunge. The same picture appears in Colossians 2:12, “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him.” The action of baptism, going down into the water and rising up out of it, is a participation in and a portrait of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The form is not arbitrary; it preaches the gospel every time it is done.

Draw out what God is doing in that moment. Baptism is not the new Christian putting on a show for the church; it is God uniting the believer with the saving acts of His Son. The descent into the water joins us to Christ’s death and burial; the rising joins us to His resurrection. What looks like a simple, humble act is in fact one of the most profound moments in a human life, the meeting place of the believer’s faith and the Savior’s finished work.

Help students feel the beauty of it. God did not ask us merely to think about the gospel; He gave us a way to enter it, to be buried and raised with His Son. Every baptism reenacts the empty tomb. The teacher can invite students to see their own baptism, or a baptism they have witnessed, with new eyes: not a ritual, but a resurrection in miniature.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as a burial, which presupposes the death of the old self
- The form of baptism (immersion) preaching the death, burial, and resurrection (Colossians 2:12)
- The meaning of the word baptize as to immerse or plunge
- Baptism as God uniting the believer with Christ’s saving acts, not a human performance
- Every baptism as a reenactment of the empty tomb

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul describe baptism as a burial?
- What does the picture of going down into the water and rising up teach about the gospel?
- How does seeing baptism as a burial and resurrection change the way you view it?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul says we were raised “in order that ... we too might walk in newness of life” (v. 4). Where does your daily life still look more like the old life than the new one? Name one specific area where Christ is calling you to start walking in the newness He has given you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the goal Paul names: that “we too might walk in newness of life.” Baptism is not the finish line but the starting line of a new way of living. The question gently exposes the gap between the new life we were given and the old patterns that often still run the show.

Help students locate the gap honestly. Newness of life is meant to touch everything: how we speak, how we handle anger, what we do with our time and money, how we treat our families, what we feed our minds. Most of us have certain areas that have been thoroughly made new and others that still look exactly like the old life. The aim is to identify one specific area where the old patterns persist.

Move toward one concrete step of new-life walking. Walking is a fitting image: it is steady, ordinary, one step at a time, in a direction. Newness of life is lived out not in dramatic leaps but in daily steps that match who we now are in Christ. Ask each student to name one area where their walk still looks like the old life and one step they will take this week to walk in the newness Christ has given.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as the starting line of a new way of living, not the finish
- Newness of life touching every area, not just the religious parts
- The gap between the new life given and old patterns retained
- Walking in newness as steady, daily, directional obedience

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your daily life still look more like the old life than the new?
- Why do some areas of life get made new while others stay the same?
- What is one step toward walking in newness of life this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul’s whole point is that baptism joins us to both the death and the resurrection of Jesus, so that “we too might walk in newness of life” (v. 4). What is this “newness of life,” and how is the Christian life meant to be lived out of Christ’s resurrection power rather than our own willpower?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question opens up the positive heart of the passage: the new life is resurrection life. Paul deliberately ties our new walk to the power that raised Jesus: “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” The same power that emptied the tomb is the power at work in the believer. This is the crucial point: the Christian life is not mainly a matter of trying harder but of living out of a life we have been given.

Help students grasp the difference between willpower and resurrection power. Many believers fight sin and pursue holiness as though everything depends on gritting their teeth and trying to be better, and they end up exhausted and discouraged. Paul points to a deeper resource. We have been joined to the risen Christ; His life is now ours. We still make real effort, but it is effort that draws on His power and flows from union with Him, not effort that tries to manufacture change on its own.

Define newness of life concretely. It is not merely a fresh start or a turning over of a new leaf, the kind of self-improvement anyone might attempt. It is a new kind of life altogether, the very life of the risen Christ animating the believer. New desires, new affections, new direction, new power to obey, all of it flows from being alive with His life. The old self could never produce this; it is resurrection life, and it is a gift.

Bring it home with hope. To a student weary of failing, this is good news: you are not on your own. You have been raised with Christ, and His resurrection life is the engine of your new walk. The teacher can encourage students to stop trying to live the Christian life in their own strength and to start drawing daily on the risen life they were given in baptism.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The new life as resurrection life, powered by what raised Jesus
- The difference between willpower and resurrection power
- Newness of life as Christ’s own life in the believer, not mere self-improvement
- Holy living as flowing from union with the risen Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between trying harder and living out of resurrection power?
- Where have you been fighting sin in your own strength rather than Christ’s?
- How would your week change if you drew daily on the risen life you were given?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul says, “one who has died has been set free from sin” (v. 7). What sin still seems to hold power over you, as if you were still its slave? How does knowing that you died with Christ and were set free change the way you fight that battle?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a striking declaration: “one who has died has been set free from sin.” This question asks students to bring that truth to bear on the particular sin that still seems to master them. Many believers live as though sin were still their owner, resigned to defeat, convinced that some pattern will always rule them. Paul says the slavery is broken.

Help students understand the kind of freedom Paul means without overstating it. He is not saying a Christian can no longer sin, or that temptation disappears. He is saying that sin’s rightful ownership of us is ended. The slave master has no legal claim anymore. We may still hear his voice and feel his pull, but we are no longer obligated to obey, because we died, and the dead are free from their former master. This reframes the whole battle: we fight not as slaves hoping for freedom, but as free people resisting a former owner who no longer owns us.

Move toward the practical difference this makes. When we believe we are still slaves, we surrender before the fight begins. When we believe we have been set free, we resist with confidence, knowing the outcome is not in doubt. Ask each student to name the sin that still feels like a master and to consider how facing it as a freed person, rather than a helpless slave, changes the way they will fight it this week. Encourage them to draw on the means God gives: prayer, the word, the fellowship and accountability of the church, and the power of the risen Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Death with Christ as the breaking of sin’s ownership over us
- Freedom from sin’s mastery, not freedom from the presence of temptation
- Fighting sin as a freed person rather than a helpless slave
- The means God gives for the fight (prayer, the word, the church, Christ’s power)

Discussion Prompts

- What sin still seems to hold power over you, as if you were its slave?
- How does knowing you died with Christ and were set free reframe that battle?
- What is one way you will fight that sin this week as a free person, not a slave?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says, “if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (v. 5). What does it mean to be “united with” Christ, and how does this union give us both new life now and the certain hope of resurrection to come?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question draws out the rich theme of union with Christ. Paul says, “if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” The word pictures a deep joining, a growing together, like a branch grafted into a vine. Everything that is true of Christ becomes, in Him, true for us. His death counts as our death; His resurrection guarantees ours.

Help students see both the present and future dimensions. There is a present union: we already share in His risen life and walk in newness now. And there is a future certainty: because we are joined to the One who rose bodily from the grave, we “shall certainly” share in a resurrection like His. The little word “certainly” is precious. Our future resurrection is not a wish but a guarantee, secured by our union with the risen Lord. The Christian faces death itself as one already joined to the Conqueror of death.

Connect this to the believer’s daily hope. Union with Christ means we are never facing life, or death, alone or on our own resources. We are bound to Him. This is the deep security beneath the Christian life: not that we are strong enough to hold on to Christ, but that we have been joined to Him. The teacher can let this truth steady students who are anxious about the future or grieving a loss, pointing them to the resurrection that is certain because Christ’s own resurrection is certain.

Keep it tethered to baptism, where Paul has rooted it. It is in baptism that this union was enacted, the believer joined to Christ’s death and raised with Him. The hope of future resurrection and the power of present new life both flow from the same source: being united with Christ, the risen Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Union with Christ as a deep joining in which His death and resurrection become ours
- The present dimension: sharing now in Christ’s risen life
- The future certainty: a guaranteed resurrection because we are joined to the risen Lord
- Security grounded in being joined to Christ, not in our own strength to hold on

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be “united with” Christ?
- How does union with the risen Christ give you certainty about your own resurrection?
- How does this union steady you in the face of the future, or of loss?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul wants us to see ourselves as people who have died and risen with Christ. When you think about your own identity, do you see yourself first as a forgiven, raised-up new creation in Christ,

or as the same old person still defined by your past and your failures? How would truly believing Paul's words reshape the way you see yourself?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question goes to the heart of Christian identity. Paul wants believers to see themselves in a particular way: as people who have died and risen with Christ. Yet many sincere Christians still see themselves first through the lens of their past, their failures, and their old labels. The aim here is to let Paul's words reshape the way students understand who they actually are.

Help students notice the gap between their feelings and the facts. Feelings often say, "I am the same old person, defined by what I have done and what was done to me." Paul says, "you died, you were buried, you were raised; you are a new creation in Christ." Christian identity is not based on how we feel about ourselves on a given day but on what God has actually done. The old self was crucified; the new self has been raised. That is the truth, whether or not it matches the mirror or the mood.

Move toward living from the new identity. When we believe we are still the old person, we live down to that belief, expecting failure and defining ourselves by sin. When we believe we are raised-up new creations, we begin to live up to who we actually are in Christ. Ask each student where they are still letting the old identity define them, and what it would look like this week to reckon themselves what Paul says they are: dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christian identity grounded in what God has done, not in feelings or past
- Seeing oneself as a raised-up new creation rather than the old self
- The danger of living down to a false, old identity
- Reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:11)

Discussion Prompts

- Do you see yourself first as a new creation in Christ or as your old self? Why?
- How do your feelings about yourself differ from what God says is true of you?
- What would change this week if you truly lived from your new identity in Christ?

Question 9

Student Question:

This passage is one of the clearest in all of Scripture on the meaning of baptism, joining it directly to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and to our freedom from sin. Drawing on Romans 6 and the rest of the New Testament, what does baptism actually accomplish, why is it more than a mere outward symbol added after salvation, and what does the burial-and-resurrection picture tell us about how it is to be done?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the most doctrinally significant question of the lesson, and Romans 6 gives the teacher firm and joyful ground to stand on. The aim is to show clearly what baptism accomplishes and why it is far more than a symbol added after salvation, while keeping the tone of the passage, which is one of wonder rather than argument.

Gather what this passage alone teaches. Baptism is the point at which we are baptized “into Christ Jesus” and “into his death” (v. 3); it is a burial with Him (v. 4); it is the place we are raised “to walk in newness of life” (v. 4); it unites us with Him in a death and resurrection like His (v. 5); and it is bound up with the old self being crucified and our being “set free from sin” (vv. 6–7). In other words, baptism is where the believing penitent meets the saving death and resurrection of Christ and passes from the old life to the new. It is not a snapshot of a salvation already completed somewhere else; it is the God-appointed moment of transition.

Set this alongside the rest of the New Testament, which speaks with one voice. On the day the church began, Peter told believing, repentant hearers to “be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Ananias told Saul, already a believer who had been praying and fasting for three days, “rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Paul says those baptized into Christ have “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and were “buried with him in baptism” and “raised with him through faith” (Colossians 2:12). Peter says plainly, “baptism ... now saves you,” not as a washing of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). And Jesus Himself said, “whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). The consistent picture is that baptism is the moment faith lays hold of the cleansing and new life God offers in Christ.

This is why baptism is more than a mere outward symbol. The teacher should make the point gently but plainly, because it is widely misunderstood. Many are taught that a person is saved first, at the moment of faith alone, and is baptized later only as a public symbol of a salvation already received. But that reverses what these passages say. Scripture places forgiveness, washing, union with Christ, and new life at baptism, not before it. This does not make baptism a meritorious work that earns salvation; it is precisely the opposite. Baptism is the humble act of faith in which we do nothing but submit to be buried and raised by God’s power, trusting Christ to do the saving. It is grace received, not merit earned. We are saved by grace, through a faith that comes to Christ in repentance, confession, and baptism.

Finally, let the burial-and-resurrection picture settle the question of how baptism is done. Paul’s language of burial and rising, echoed in Colossians 2:12, fits the plain meaning of the word baptize, to immerse. Sprinkling or pouring cannot picture a burial and resurrection; immersion does, perfectly. The form is not a technicality but a portrait of the gospel acted out on the body of the believer. End the discussion where the passage does, in joy: in baptism God buried our old self with Christ and raised us to a brand new life. The right response is not anxious debate

but glad gratitude, and, for anyone who has not yet been buried and raised with Christ, a warm and open invitation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as the moment of union with Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5)
- Forgiveness, washing, and new life located at baptism, not before it (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
- Those baptized into Christ have put on Christ and were raised through faith (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12)
- Baptism as grace received through faith, not a meritorious work that earns salvation
- Why baptism is more than a symbol of a salvation already received
- Immersion as the form that pictures burial and resurrection (the meaning of baptize)
- Jesus' own words joining belief and baptism to salvation (Mark 16:16)

Discussion Prompts

- According to Romans 6 and the wider New Testament, what does baptism actually accomplish?
- How would you respond to the idea that baptism is only a symbol added after a person is saved?
- Why does the burial-and-resurrection picture point to immersion as the form of baptism?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the passage. Paul has shown you a death you died with Christ, a burial in the waters of baptism, a resurrection to newness of life, and freedom from the slavery of sin. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about baptism and new life that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks students to gather the whole passage and name one specific way Christ is forming them through it. Resist letting answers stay general. Press gently for the concrete: which truth, changing what, beginning when.

It helps to retrace the movement. Paul showed us a death we died with Christ, a burial in the waters of baptism, a resurrection to walk in newness of life, union with the risen Lord that secures our future, and freedom from the slavery of sin. Invite each student to ask which of these truths their heart most needs this week, whether it is leaving the old self buried, walking in resurrection power, fighting sin as a freed person, or resting in a new identity.

Close by reminding students that the goal is transformation, not merely information. Paul taught about baptism in order to change how his readers lived. Encourage each one to leave with a single truth to carry, return to, and pray over until the next gathering, so that the new life their baptism began keeps taking deeper root.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Scripture aimed at transformation, not merely information
- Living daily in light of one's baptism into Christ
- Walking in the newness of resurrection life
- The joy and freedom of the buried-and-raised new creation

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth about baptism and new life does your heart most need this week, and why?
- What would it look like, concretely, to live in light of that truth?
- How can this group pray for and encourage you in that one step?