

HOW TO START OVER AGAIN!

His name was Abbie Hoffman. He was born in 1937 in the United States. He became a political rebel during the 1960's and 70's. He led many protests against the American government and the American way of life. Later he was arrested on drug charges. Rather than face a trial he changed his name to Barry Freed and then had plastic surgery to change his appearance. A number of years later he turned himself in to police. Sadly, in 1989 Abbie Hoffman committed suicide.

What can we learn from this story? Hoffman tried to escape his past and change his life on his own, but it didn't work. His past caught up with him and his life ended in tragedy. Maybe you are also trying to put the past behind you. Maybe you are struggling with bad habits. Maybe you are dealing with regrets and hurts that you just can't seem to shake off.

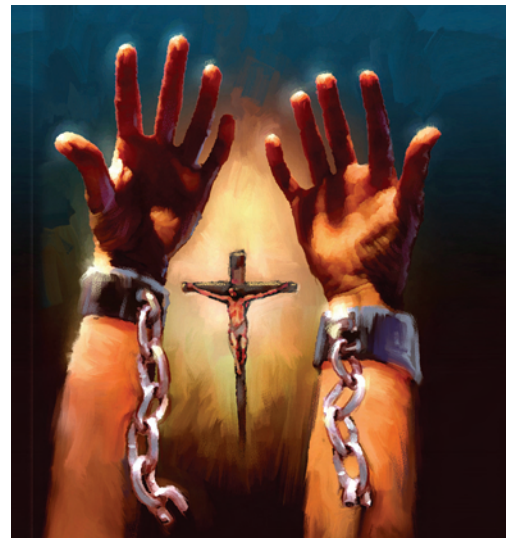
Good news. First, you are not alone. All have sinned and done wrong. (Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Tim. 1:15) God's grace and forgiveness, regardless of your past, are available to you today. You can find forgiveness, healing and restoration at the cross of Christ. The Gospel is just this – we can have a fresh start! We can have a brand new life when we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord!

KEY POINTS

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water.” (Matthew 3:13-16) Jesus, though sinless, was baptized to set us an example.



Jesus, though sinless, was baptized to set us an example.



You can find forgiveness, healing and restoration at the cross of Christ.



Those who accept Christ are baptized in His name.

To Jesus, baptism was very important. He told His followers to go and make disciples of all nations and to baptize them. (Matthew 28:18-20). Peter's sermon at Pentecost ended with this appeal: “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts. 2:38) Later it states that “those who gladly received his word were baptized...” (Acts. 2:41). Those who accept Christ as Lord are instructed and expected to be baptized in His name.

There is an interesting story of Philip who preached to a “eunuch” concerning the death of Jesus the Messiah. The man came under conviction. What happened next? “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.” (Acts 8:36-38) Baptism always follows our profession of faith in Jesus. In fact Jesus Himself said that “he who believes and is baptized will be saved.” (Mark 16:16)



Biblical baptism is by total immersion in water.

What does it mean to be baptized? The Bible is clear about this as well. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead . . . even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4) The act of baptism is our public expression that we have decided to follow Jesus; that we are dead to our old self and now are alive to Christ; no longer slaves to sin but rather slaves of righteousness.

There is another question that we must answer and that is, what is the biblical method of baptism? The Bible states that there is only one baptism: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph. 4:5) The Greek word “baptizo” tells us that baptism means “to dip in or under.” A man tells a story about how he met a Greek man in a restaurant and asked him what the word “baptizo” meant in Greek. The man took a donut and immersed it in his cup of coffee. “There,” he said, “I just baptized my donut.” Biblical baptism is accomplished by immersion in water.

When John the Baptist baptized in the time of Christ, the Bible says that people came from all over “and were baptized by him in the Jordan river.” (John 3:6) He did not sprinkle them. He baptized them in the river. After Jesus was baptized the Bible says he came “up immediately from the water.” (Matt. 3:16) In fact, in John 3:23 the Bible says that John the Baptist was “baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” You don’t need much water to get sprinkled. You need much water to completely immerse someone. Baptism was always by immersion.

Baptism is not only for those who have received Jesus as Savior for the first time, but it can also be appropriate for those who are accepting new truth about Jesus and His Word. (Acts. 19:5).

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Baptism is a life and death decision. It’s a choice to die to our old self and live for Jesus. Are you ready to die to self and live for Jesus regardless of the cost? When the apostle Paul faced this decision, he didn’t hesitate. He had seen the light and that light was Christ Jesus. He was baptized and began a new life with Christ.

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior but have not yet been baptized, what are you waiting for? Today is the day of your salvation! Don’t you want to express your desire to be wholly His by following your Lord in His example of being baptized? Is it your desire to follow your Lord in this sacred rite? If so, talk with a Pastor and set the date for your baptism today!