

- How did John respond when Jesus came to be baptised? Why? (Matt 3:11-14)
- In Scripture, we often see a connection between 'water' and 'spirit'. What do you think John meant when he said "I baptize you with water, but (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (Mark 1:8)

Read Matt 3:15-17, Jesus did not need to be baptised with water for the forgiveness of his sins. Being the Son of God, he did not need to experience baptism of the Holy Spirit either.

- Why do you think Jesus intentionally did this? Is there an example here for us to follow?
- What do you think was the significance of God pronouncing that Jesus is the one "whom I love"/ "the Beloved" and "with you I am well pleased."? (Mark 1:11)
- Many people give gifts to people who they love and to show them their favour and pleasure towards them. What do you think of the idea that, in giving us the Holy Spirit, God is also demonstrating his love and generosity towards us?

In Ezekiel 36, a powerful prophecy was given to the people of Israel. They were defiled and corrupted by their sin. As a result, they were the subject of God's judgement. Ezekiel spoke these words of God to his people:

"I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you ... and bring you back ... I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezek 36:24-28)

- What words or phrases stand out for you in this passage? What words, phrases or ideas are repeated?
- What do you think it means to be given a "new heart" and have "a new spirit in you"? Why is this so important?

In 1 Cor 6:9,11 (NLT) we read: "Don't you realise that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? ... But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit have worked in our lives to cleanse us from sin.

- If we have been purified from sin (past tense), then what does that mean for how we are supposed to live our lives? Is there any excuse for us engaging in sin?

In Eph 5:25-27 (NLT) we read that: "... Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault." In Col 1:22 (NLT) we read: "he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault."

- What standards are given in these verses about how we should try to live our lives, both individually and corporately? Is this standard realistic?

In 1 John 1:7, we read that "the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses/ purifies us from all sin." But then, in Titus 3:4-7, we are then told that:

"(God) saved us (past tense) through the **washing of rebirth** (*lit: again 'genesis' or again birth or regeneration*) **and renewal** (*lit: completing a process of making new or renovation*) **by the Holy Spirit**, whom he **poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour**, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

REFLECT & SHARE: In Rom 12:1, Paul tells us to "offer (our) bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship." Old Testament sacrifices needed to be perfect and without blemish. God has worked in us and continues to work in us so we can come into his presence and worship Him. How much do you think about and prioritise living a life that is pleasing to God – and see that as being an integral part of your worship?