**Bible study on Luke 3:15-17,21-22**

**Meeting in the waters**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

God, our loving parent,
you encouraged Jesus at his baptism,
saying you were well pleased
when he presented himself
along with the community
for baptism in the Jordan.
May you be pleased with us
as we present ourselves here today.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

Luke 3: 15-17,21-22

**15**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. **16**John answered them all, “I baptize you with[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%203&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25042b)] water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%203&version=NIV#fen-NIV-25042c)] the Holy Spirit and fire. **17**His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

**21**When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened **22**and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

This passage tells us who Jesus is via the witness of John the Baptist and an Old Testament-style theophany as the voice of God identifies Jesus as his Son (The voice from heaven is fulfilment of Genesis 22:2, Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1). The plunging of the person into the waters and the raising up again into the new life is intimately related to an experience with God in the Spirit. This is referred to again in Acts 10:38 when Peter recalls the ‘anointing’ of Jesus.

There is also an element of judgement in this passage. The ‘fire’ (v.16,17) relates to the fire of judgement for the sinful who do not repent. We are to expect a divided response to the message and person of Christ. The fire here also suggests Pentecost, and this is linked with the baptism of the Spirit both in the waters for Christ and in the future at the beginning of Acts.

 **Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

What are the ways in which we go through the waters? In recent times, there seems to have been an increase in serious flooding events, causing devastation to homes and livelihoods. The Isaiah passage suggests that God is present in these hard times and sustains us through them. In the same way the psalmist speaks of the God who is with them as they ‘walk through the valley of the shadow of death’ (Psalm 23:4, NIV). How might this be of comfort to those who are going through waters in your community? How can we be present for those who suffer?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A group of women in a river  Description automatically generated |   |

**Questions**

* Have you been baptized? Do you remember it?
* How has your faith helped you through ‘deep waters’?
* How can you as a community support those who face difficult times this year?

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

*Blow up a pair of water wings, put them on and hold out your arms, saying:*
Father, fill our water wings
with the breath of the Spirit,
so that holding the hand of your Son
we may be supported
through the waters of this week.
**Amen.**