

Baptism Celebration – 6/15/14

Welcome to our baptism celebration; We do this about 3 times a year, and this time we are baptizing 24 people – 19 here at the Main Campus, and 5 at our West Campus
And each person has spent a good deal of time and effort working through a Bible study to understand what baptism is, what they're doing, and why
But before we get to it, I want to be clear about a few things

➤ #1 – baptism doesn't save you

If it did, or in some way contributed to it – that would be a work
And **2 Timothy 1:9** says that – [God] *saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace*
God saved us and called us – not b/c of our works
It's God's *grace* in your life that saves you, *not* your works of obedience
We obey *b/c* we're saved, not to *get* saved*****

➤ Or, another way to look at it, is that **salvation is a gift** – a free gift of God
Eph 2:8-9 says that it's by *grace* we are saved, through *faith* – not something we *do*, but something we *believe*; And this is not our own doing, this saving . . .
It is a *gift* of God, not a result of works; Salvation is a gift
And baptism is an act of allegiance/obedience that shows you've *embraced* that gift
That indeed, you've been saved

And it's so important, that . . .

An *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction of terms

That's one of the reasons Peter linked it so closely with repentance in **Acts 2:38**
Saying – *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*

Repent – as in confess your sin, and stop doing it
Ask God to forgive you, and start doing what's right; That's repentance
Repentance that results in the forgiveness of your sins, and salvation from their consequences

➤ But notice he says – repent and be *baptized* for the forgiveness of sins
Linking them so closely together that some people think you have to be *baptized* in order to be saved; But we know from 2 Tim 1:9, that can't be true
B/c that would make baptism a work – something tangible you *do*, in order to be saved

So Peter's not saying that you have to be *baptized* in order to be saved, but that baptism goes *hand in hand* with salvation
So closely it seems, that an *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction*****

➤ And no wonder, b/c it's such a powerful symbol (**Reasons For Baptism**)
Showing first of all, that . . .

1. It shows you're a *follower* of Jesus

Each/every person getting baptized has *admitted* they're a sinner in need of a Savior
And *believe* that Jesus is their Savior – that when he died on the cross, he died for them
So they've *repented* of their sin, asking God to forgive them; *Received* him into their life to live *his* way, for *his* glory; And are getting baptized to show it
To declare publicly that they're a follower of Christ; That's the 1st reason for baptism

2. It encourages *other* followers

IOW baptisms encourage the *church* – those who have *already* been baptized
Reminding us of *our* walk with Christ, and *our* salvation, and *our* commitment
Even refueling us at times, to keep on

3. It *challenges* unbelievers

It challenges those who don't believe in Jesus; Who don't follow him as Lord of their lives; Urging them to repent, and do so; For God's glory, and their joy; And need
You may well know that God loves you; But do you realize you *need* him?
If that's you – I trust you'll listen closely; And maybe even make this the day of *your* salvation

4. It *glorifies* God

And that's the ultimate point – to glorify the one who saved us in the first place, and keeps us for all eternity
4 reasons for baptism (**Summary**); In addition to the fact that it's so closely related to salvation, that an *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction of terms

➤ And we want to emphasize all that, with a verbal testimony
Along *with* their baptism, each person will give a testimony of their salvation; B/c . . .

Testimonies reinforce the *picture* of baptism

If you've ever looked at a piece of art and wished for a little plaque that explained what in the world the author was trying to convey, you know what I'm talking about
That's what a testimony is to baptism; It clarifies what it's all about, and reinforces the symbolism – explicitly giving credit where credit is due; And it's a biblical thing

Like when David said to God in **Ps 40:9-10** – *I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. [10] I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.*

That's exactly what each and every person is doing by giving a verbal testimony in baptism; They're magnifying all the more, God's work of . . .
Deliverance, and faithfulness, and salvation in their lives*****
Reinforcing what we *see*, with what we hear

➤ Pray (in tank) – Bless; Meaningful, Memorable; Be glorified

Post-baptisms

I can't help but think that many of *you* need to be baptized

You're saved, but you're living a contradiction – you've never been baptized as a believer

If that's you, can I encourage you to make a commitment *now*, to get baptized next time

Pick up a packet at the Welcome Center, or go online, and start working on it

B/c an unbaptized believer is a contradiction of terms

➤ I also can't help but think that that some of you have been sitting there, and it's all of a sudden clicked – you get it

You understand for the first time, that you're a sinner in need of a Savior

And believe in Jesus – that when he died on the cross, he did so for *you*

If that's you, I want to lead you in a prayer of repentance, to receive Jesus yourself

To be one of his followers, just like they are

➤ Pray – God, I admit that I'm a sinner, separated from you

And I believe that Jesus died to save me from my sins

So I repent of my sin, Lord – please forgive me, and help me to turn from it

I receive you as Lord of my life, from now on

God would you encourage those who just embraced your free gift of salvation?

Would you bolster them and protect them, lead them and connect them to others in our church? And strengthen them by your Spirit, to walk in your way?

And for those who *don't* believe, or *won't* repent . . .

Would you convict them of their sin, and convince them of their need?

Would you challenge their thinking and soften their heart?

Would you rescue them from their death and bondage before it's too late?

I praise you Lord, for all you've done, and all you're doing

I praise you for those who just got baptized

And as we give of our tithes and offerings – we do so with the same heart

A heart of praise to honor and glorify you with our entire lives

Close

This is Evie Gardner's last weekend (**photo**) as the Director of Women's Ministries

After 8 years of faithful and fruitful service, she feels led to hand the ministry off to a successor, and wait on the Lord for what's next

And while we look for that person, Becky, my wife, is going to serve in that role on an *interim* basis

So I trust you'll express your thanks and extend your love to Evie; She has invested a great deal of time, talent, and effort for the cause of Christ in our church

Her *steadfast spirit* and *diligence* has been a blessing

She's made an eternal *impact* in discipling the believers and equipping the saints

I'm personally thankful for her *commitment to the Lord* and *love for women*

So thank you, Evie; And God bless you as you enter a new phase of life

➤ New Believer Packets; Rejoice with those who were baptized