

Baptism and Membership Renewal – 11/14/21

This service is a bit different from our norm, but really good. Because it's a baptism celebration, a membership renewal, a new member *welcome*, and an anniversary service all in one. Hundreds of you are renewing your membership, 21 people are becoming new members, and 23 of you are expressing your faith and obedience to Jesus in the waters of baptism. 13 students and 10 adults.

➤ But first is our anniversary. Coram Deo, **Happy Anniversary**. Today marks the 17th year of our existence as a church. And if we didn't celebrate it, we'd be remiss. (**Ps 9:1**) Because King David said— *I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all your wonderful deeds*. I'll talk about them. Tell them to the congregation. And this certainly qualifies as a wonderful deed of the Lord.

We first opened our doors 17 years ago to the day. November 14, 2004. And what an amazing work of *grace*. From changed hearts to changed lives. Restored marriages to godly offspring. Physical growth to spiritual maturity. This is a God story.

And it's *our* story. *Your* story. Just like your *family* history is part of your story, even though you weren't around for it; our *church* history is part of your story. Even if you just started attending. That's how families work.

And what a privilege. To be a part of God's promise to build his church. So Happy Anniversary. Praise the Lord.

➤ The second thing we can celebrate, is **membership**. Welcoming *new* members, and celebrating *renewing* members. People are both *joining* our church this weekend, and renewing their *commitments* to our church this weekend. Their commitments to God's work of ministry and God's people, right here.

So I'd like to do 2 things:

1. I'd like to *recognize* the new members, and welcome you.
2. I'd like to recognize *existing* members, and thank you.

So if you're one of the 21 people *joining* our church this weekend (**New Member List**), would you stand and remain standing? God bless you. We're so encouraged by you; that you're taking this step of commitment. God is adding more and more people to our number who are all in. Praise the Lord.

And while you remain standing, would those of you *renewing* your membership join them? Praise the Lord for you too. And *thank* you. You are truly the pillars of our church as Paul says it. (1 Tim 3:15). Doing more together than we can alone.

➤ As you know, church membership is a *public expression of a personal commitment*. A commitment to *belong* together in mutual partnership, *work* together for mutual goals, and *stick* together in mutual love. What's more, it reflects a desire and commitment to place yourself under the guidance and care of those who *lead*. Those entrusted with *keeping watch over your souls* the Bible says. (Heb 13:17)

We've chosen to express such commitments with **5 Statements**. Statements I'd like to read together, to reaffirm our membership and love for one another. Join me.

1. *I have, by God's grace, become a follower of Jesus Christ, and I have been baptized as a visible way of demonstrating that commitment.*
2. *I will, with God's help, seek to maintain my consistent disciplines of prayer, Bible study, quietness with God, and worship attendance.*
3. *I will, with God's direction, pursue an active role in building up the body of Christ at Coram Deo Bible Church through service and ministry.*
4. *I will, with God's strength, earnestly love my brothers and sisters in Christ both in word and deed; and will, when personally offended, speak lovingly and directly with those involved.*
5. *I will, with God's provision, financially support the ministries of Coram Deo Bible Church by faithfully giving back to the Lord a biblical portion of my increase.*

Amen. God bless you for that. And thank you. For those renewing your membership, thank you.

And for those of you *joining* our church, welcome; **welcome to membership** at Coram Deo Bible Church. We look forward to many years of faithful, fruitful partnership together.

➤ That brings us to **baptism**. Celebrating young and old alike, who are publicly declaring their identification with Jesus. Their devotion to him. Their love for him. Their life in him.

And if I were to summarize their testimonies, it would go something like this:

"I was a sinner far from God, I put my faith in Jesus and repented of my sin, and now I'm getting baptized to show it; to declare my *new life* in him."

That's it. That's the gist of every single testimony. Just like the *first* believers in Acts 8. And I want you to see it. Acts 8:9-13.

➤ This is the time in the early church when Philip, one of the leaders, was forced to leave Jerusalem due to persecution. And going to Samaria, he *proclaimed to them the Christ* it says. V5 – *Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ*. In other words, he preached the Gospel; the Good News of God's salvation found in Jesus. That he's Lord, and we need him. We're sinners, and he saves.

And the effect was astounding. People actually believed, and were baptized to show it. Resulting in great joy. *But there was a man named Simon [v9], who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great*. [As opposed to Jesus.]

[10] *They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great."* [11] *And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.*

[12] *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women*. [When they believed, they were baptized.] [13] *Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.*

➤ The Samaritans had seen it all; miracles, magicians, signs, wonders, you name it. But the power of the message, the power of the Gospel, was so compelling that they set aside their *old* ways, and their *old* beliefs, and their *old* allegiances; and publicly aligned themselves with *Jesus*.

And the way they did it, the way they publicly aligned themselves, was *baptism*. V12. *When they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized*. Immersed in water, because that's what baptized means, to declare their belief in Jesus. And their *connection* with him. And *love* for him.

No longer were they followers of Simon, but Jesus. No longer were they lovers of themselves, but God. No longer were they enthralled with the world, but the church; the *people* of God. And they got baptized to show it. The very thing happening this morning. (Baptizees to back)

➤ Each and every person we're going to hear from, is so gripped by their relationship with Jesus, they're publicly aligning themselves with him in baptism. Symbolic of a changed mind and cleansed of heart. Representative of their salvation from judgment, and deliverance to life.

Baptism doesn't save you, but shows you *have* been saved. The Bible is clear. Baptism doesn't forgive you, but shows you *have* been forgiven. It doesn't *establish* your relationship with Jesus, it shows you already *have* it.

➤ If any of that's news to you, watch and listen carefully. And if your heart burns within you to get right with God *yourself*, do it. Right where you sit. Call on Jesus and repent of your sin. Ask him to forgive you and save you. Receive him into your heart and give him your life. In fact, I'm going to lead you in a prayer to that effect at the end.

For the rest of you, who've already *made* that decision, get ready to rejoice and be blessed. Because the testimonies and baptisms of changed lives, is an awesome work of grace.

Pray – Father, be glorified in our midst. Be exalted. And by your Spirit, make these baptisms as meaningful and memorable as possible. For us *and* them.

Baptisms

Post-Baptisms

You just heard 12/11 different stories of how God used the circumstances of life, to get their attention and prepare their heart, to receive the Gospel; the good news of Jesus. That God so loved us, he sent him to die in our place. To take the punishment *we* deserve for our sin, and give us new life in exchange. That's the Gospel.

But it only applies if you . . .

Admit you're a sinner

The Bible says – *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*. (Rom 3:23) And embracing the Gospel starts by admitting that's you. That in God's eyes, you're a sinner.

Second, the Gospel only applies if you . . .

Believe in Jesus

That when he died, he died for *you*. And rose again so you could too. So you could be spared from an eternity of judgment, and given new life starting right now.

And third . . .

Repent of your sin

Ask God to *forgive* you of your sin, and make a commitment to *turn* from it. Repent.

And finally . . .

Receive him into your life

To follow him as *Lord* of your life. Living *his* way, and enjoying his *presence* forever. Pursuing him in good times, and leaning on him in bad ones. Admit, believe, repent, and receive.

If you're ready to do that, if you want to be saved, pray with me right now.

I admit . . . But I believe . . . So I repent . . . And I receive. Amen.

You are loved