

Baptism and BELONGING

January 14, 2018

DAY 1: Baptism

1. Last week we looked at what it means to become a Christian and what anchors us as Christians. Our conversion to Christ occurs when we repent of our sin and turn in faith to Christ as the One who paid for our sins, taking them upon Himself on the cross.

2. Baptism is so important that it's included in the Great Commission:

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

3. Baptism follows our conversion to Christ, and illustrates it.

4. Baptism is a symbol of the new life we gained in Christ. (Baptism does not save us).

Romans 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5. These verses indicate two things that are symbolized in our baptism:

- a. Our death to self, to sin, and our old way of living, (death and burial as we are immersed) and
- b. Being raised to walk a new life (as we are brought back up out of the "watery grave").

Acts 18:8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

6. When Paul was on his missionary journey to the city of Corinth, there were a number of people who became Christians. What did they do next?

7. Have you been baptized since coming to faith in Christ?

8. What strikes you most from these verses on baptism?

DAY 2: What is “church?” A place where we BELONG.

1. Before we look at what a church is, let’s list what it’s not. It **not** a place:

- a. Where you get saved by attending,
- b. To rack up brownie points with God
- c. Where people “have it all together,”
- d. Where Christians think they “have it all together.”

2. The word “church” in the New Testament literally means, “the called out ones”. It is a people who have been “called out” of the world and its ways, and called to follow God and His ways.

3. The church is compared to a body, with a head and many members...

*Romans 12:4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and **each member belongs to all the others.***

“Body” – How does the analogy of each of God’s people being a member of a body illustrate a church?

4. The church is called the “body of Christ.”

*Romans 7:4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that **you might belong to another,** to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.*

--We are considered “the body of Christ.” Think of us as the feet, hands, eyes, etc. of the risen Christ.

5. The church is called God’s “family” - A church is also a family.

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

1 Timothy 5:1 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

6. What strikes you most about church from today’s verses?

DAY 3: The five purposes of a church

1. The first purpose of a church is **evangelism**, sharing the good news of the gospel in order for people to become Christians.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

2. The second purpose of a church is **discipleship**, helping Christians grow in Christ-like character, behavior, and relationships.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

3. The third purpose of a church is **worship**.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

4. The fourth purpose of a church is **ministry**.

1 Peter 4:9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

¹⁰ *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

¹¹ *If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

5. The fifth purpose of a church is **fellowship**.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

6. Which of these purposes strikes you the most? What could you do to make a greater difference in your church seeking to fulfill its five purposes?

DAY 4: The church as an organism and organization

1. The church is a group of people where relationships matter and what gets done matters.
2. The church is a combination of two types of entities. The first is “church as an organism.” Here, a church is fluid, life-giving, relational, may seem “spontaneous,” etc.
3. The church is also a second type of entity: “church as an organization.” There is the need for some type of organization when a church gets beyond a weekly attendance of three people. Leadership, decision-making and a communication structure or system helps facilitate the health of the church.

4. Paul gives us an example of church as organism and church as organization in the following six verses:

Ephesians 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

5. Go back and:

- a. Underline words and phrases that are more reflective of church as an organization.
- b. Circle words and phrases that are more reflective of church as an organism.

6. What strikes you most about church as an organization?

7. What strikes you most about church as an organism?

8. What is your biggest take away from today's lesson about church?

DAY 5: The church as a “laboratory”

1. One of the complaints we hear in our culture about church is “it’s just a bunch of hypocrites.”

a. In one sense that is a “correct” statement, at least in this sense. If the expectation of “church people” is that of “obeying God like we’re supposed to,” then the charge of being hypocrites is true IF we claim to be a people that obey God very, very well.

b. We do not live up to God’s standards. Heck, we don’t even live up to our own personal standards, let alone God’s!

c. Of course, the life we aspire to live, Christ-likeness, is a life way beyond our reach. That does not negate the fact that we reach high, but it also means that we should not be surprised when we fall short of God’s standards. Of course we will!

2. If you are a church member that has the expectation that church is supposed to be a near-heaven-like experience, you’ll be severely disillusioned by church life. Again, of course we will fall short of God’s standards! We all will, and so will you.

3. The New Testament assumes these are realistic expectations of church life. The church is a “laboratory,” where we learn how to live through trial and error. In the following verses, underline the words and phrases that both:

a. Assume that things will not always be “peachy” in church life, AND

b. There is something we are to do and/or relate to one another that has an opportunity to make things better in church life.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

¹³ *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

¹⁴ *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Romans 15:5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,

⁶ *so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

⁷ *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

4. Let’s close this week with a splendid quote about church life:

“Community is not an ideal; it is people. It is you and I. In community we are called to love people just as they are with their wounds and their gifts, not as we would want them to be. Community means giving them space, helping them to grow. It means also receiving from them so that we too can grow. It is giving each other freedom; it is giving each other trust; it is confirming but also challenging each other. We give dignity to each other by the way we listen to each other, in a spirit of trust and of dying to oneself so that the other may live, grow and give.”
- Jean Vanier

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?