

Baptism—When Should I Be Baptized?

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- [0 : 00] All right, guys. Man, thanks for coming. It's an honor to talk with you and share with you and think through this all-important topic.
- So this is the first of two, and we have the second one. The second installment of this is angled toward parents that are trying to navigate this question of when should my child be baptized?
- But you're here because you're asking the question, when should I be baptized? And so, yeah, so I was thinking about the Beatles, which is a weird way to kind of start this.
- Hey, good morning. There's outlines right there. Grab one of those. So I was thinking about the Beatles, like the band, the Beatles. George Harrison, at one point, whenever they were doing this world tour, I think they're at Madison Square Garden.
- George Harrison gets up into the camera at the end of their concert, and they're in transit from Madison Square Garden. And he stares deeply into the camera, and there's like millions of people watching nationwide.
- [1 : 08] And he looks just as piercing set of questions. He says, who are you? Where are you from? And where are you going? You know, those are some big questions. And I think there are very few more important questions than this question we're going to consider today is, are you sure you're a Christian?
- And so if you look at the subtitle of our class is, how can I be, how can I be sure that I am a Christian? Which might seem kind of weird to talk about that. And we're like, hey, we're talking about baptism.
- I thought this is the baptism class. Well, why do we begin a class about baptism with that question? Well, we're definitely going to get to baptism. So just stay tuned. We're good. We are going to get there.
- I promise. But I want to briefly consider at the outset of the class what the Bible reveals about the relationship between baptism and belief, because that's a really important question. And churches answer that in different ways.
- And so I want to briefly just look at two texts that are on your paper, they're on your outline. And the first one is Peter at Pentecost. So this is kind of like the birthday of the church.
- [2 : 21] And if you remember the context in Acts chapter two, Jesus has already come. He's gone. He's ascended to heaven. And the Holy Spirit has come on the apostles. And he sent the apostles to declare this message to all these different people that speak different languages that are gathered.
- The Jews that have come from different places. Some are like from different places all throughout the Roman Empire. So they speak different languages, but they are all Jewish and they gather in Jerusalem for the festival.
- And Peter preaches a sermon. He preaches a gospel sermon to all of these people that are hearing from all over the Roman Empire.

And it says in Acts two, now, when they heard this, they heard this gospel preaching. They were cut to the heart. It's an interesting phrase.

They were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? They wanted to know what to do in response to what they heard.

[3 : 21] And Peter said to them, here it is. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And then fast forward just a couple of verses that says, So those who received the word, received his word and were baptized. And they were added that day about 3000 souls.

Which is a it's a fascinating way to talk about the receiving of his word. What does that mean? What we're looking at here, we're seeing that they heard the preaching of the gospel, the good news about who Jesus Christ is.

And then they were called to believe something. Right. And then this this points to the reality that there was some kind of heart transformation prior to baptism.

There was some kind of change, some kind of belief shift that happened before the the act, the outward act of baptism. You see those words like cut to the heart.

[4 : 26] So they were they were convicted about something. They were cut to the heart. And perhaps you've experienced something like that. You hear something. It's like, ah, it's like a dagger. Like that's the Lord using conviction to drive you and that transform your beliefs about something.

And then it also says they received the word. So it wasn't just that they felt bad about something. They received something in place of the conviction. Does that make sense? So they they believe something.

They received it into their lives. They received his word. So that's that's a case study one. Let's look at case study two for just a moment. And this is a little bit forward in Acts.

Acts chapter eight. We have a guy. He's not even a pastor. His name is Philip. Philip is traveling around and he's preaching the gospel, the good news in Samaria.

So now we're in an area. There's kind of like they're not pure Jews. They're not worshipping in the right way. Everything. Everything is a little bit muddled for the Samaritans.

[5 : 26] And here Philip is kind of pressing the boundaries of who the gospel is going to. And he preaches the gospel in Samaria. Acts eight to eight twelve. And when they believed Philip as he preached the good news, there it is about about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

They were baptized, both men and women. And so, again, we see the pattern here. They heard Philip preach the good news and then they believed and then they were baptized in response to that.

So do you see the relationship between belief and baptism here? So the principle that starts to emerge as you read through the New Testament is that belief comes before baptism.

Belief comes before baptism. And so at Trinity Grace, we hold to what is called believers baptism. Maybe you've heard that phrase before. It stands in contrast with like infant baptism.

Maybe you've heard about that in like other contexts, other churches, maybe in the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist, Anglican, some other church traditions. They would baptize as infants.

[6 : 32] We would we would see the pattern in the New Testament that would stand in contrast with that because infants can't respond to the gospel. They haven't understood and been transformed before being baptized.

That makes sense what we're saying. So we understand the pattern that we see laid out in the New Testament is believers baptism. So in other words, baptism is only appropriate for those who have responded to the good news of the gospel by trusting in Jesus Christ and then giving a credible profession of faith.

I'll explain what I mean by credible profession of faith in a little bit. But the main point here is that belief comes before baptism. And so that's why we start with that question.

Are you sure that you are a Christian? Because baptism is downstream from that. And wonderfully, God hasn't left us on our own to answer that question.

We don't have to like languish and wonder. I don't know. I guess I'll never know. I'll never be baptized. I just can't know that. Actually, we're going to explore four questions now to discern if you may be ready for baptism.

[7 : 37] So let's let's just walk through these four questions. In summary, the four questions where we're going to go for the rest of our time together is first, do you understand the gospel? Second, do you believe the gospel?

Third, do you possess evidence of being born again? And then the fourth, do you understand the meaning and purpose of baptism? So that that's going to be our progression for the rest of this time.

So the first question we ask is, do you understand the gospel? So we saw already in those two passages of Acts that good news is preached.

Something is proclaimed. What is it? What are they? What did they do? What did they say? What is it that has to be believed? What do we need to understand? And so the question we start with is, do you understand the gospel?

And honestly, the gospel is kind of like the ABCs of church people. You know, it can be so easy to, you know, to hear it over and over again that we just kind of assume it.

[8 : 37] And we don't really dive into what are we actually saying here? What is it that that we're talking about? The gospel is actually of first importance. And first Corinthians 15, I think the passage is there for you.

Paul is writing to the Corinthians. These are people that are already Christians. And he says this, for I deliver to you as of first importance, highest priority.

What I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

So this is Paul, like author of the New Testament, premier church planter, planted a lot of the churches. Hey, there's outlines right there, guys, if you want to grab them. And he's saying that of all the things that are the most important, this stands above them all.

Not that the other things are not important at all. This is just a first importance foundational for everything else. The gospel that Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day.

[9 : 45] And so we often use a summary just to remember what the gospel is. We use these four words, God, man, Christ response.

God, man, Christ response. And this is on your paper. First, we always start with God. God is the origin of everything and everyone. God is the creator of everything.

He is completely and utterly holy. That means he's set apart different than any anything else that he created. He stands apart, set apart as perfect.

And he is worthy of worship. He's the only one that's worthy of worship. We tend to try to worship other things and put our hope in other things. But he's the only one that is worthy of it and can actually sustain our hope.

Right. So he's worthy of our worship as our creator and as the great God. So we always start with God. God is the first in this sequence. The second facet of this sequence is man.

[10 : 46] Man, all people are created in God's image. That means we reflect him in very beautiful and spectacular ways. And even though we've been created good.

We have all become sinful by nature. That's what Romans 3 23 says that all have sinned and fall short and not just short of one another.

And that's often what we try to compare ourselves. And we're like, well, I'm not as bad as that guy over there. I'm not as bad. Have you seen what she's done? Like, I'm not that bad. Well, that's actually the wrong standard that we're comparing ourselves to, because it says for all have sinned and fall short of the standard, the glory of God.

He's actually the standard that we're measuring ourselves up against. And remember what we just said a second ago that he's holy. He's set apart. He's perfect. Who else is perfect? None of us.

We all fall short of this standard. If this is the standard to be connected with him forever in heaven, we all fall short of that. That's what Romans 3 23 is displaying for us.

[11 : 52] So as sinners, we are separated from God and deserve his wrath. We deserve his judgment. It'd be it'd be wrong for God to not punish our sin.

That would make him a bad judge. We would be mad at any other judge that did not execute justice. If if the judge came, you had your car stolen or something like that. And you're like, this guy right here, he stole my car.

And he's like, well, I'm feeling loving today. And he just kind of like sweeps under the rug and says, I'm just gonna let everybody go. You would be upset about that, wouldn't you? Well, in a much greater way. Think about, you know, this isn't just treason against a king.

This is treason against the most high God, the creator of heaven and earth. The stakes go way up when you're dealing with this God. And so he's got to he's got to judge sin.

He's got to judge sin. And so he's holy. He's righteous. He's perfect. And that puts us in a predicament as people, because we just said that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

[12 : 53] That puts us at odds in opposition with the God of the universe. So at this point, this is really bad news. This is bad news. It's terrible news for us.

But he doesn't leave us there. And this is where Christianity stands apart from any other religion. And all other religions say, just try harder. Just do better. Try to try to outweigh the bad that you've done with the good that you've done, which we've already stated that that's an impossible task.

We're always falling short. We've already fallen short and we're going to continue to fall short. Even our best is still inadequate. But instead of demanding that we come up to God and meet us at his standard, the glory of the gospel is this, that God actually comes to us, the sinners.

He comes down to us to reach down and do something about the problem that we could do nothing about. So you think about the judge of all the earth, our judge that's been standing against us in our sin.

He doesn't stay on the throne. He comes off the throne, leaves his crown, leaves the gavel in the seat and comes down to dwell with sinners to do something about the problem.

[14 : 13] The very problem that caused his opposition against us. So Christ is the next one. Christ, Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect, sinless life.

What we could not do, he does. He lives a perfect and sinless life. He dies on the cross. Why did he do that? If we're all going to make it eventually and weigh out our good or bad with our good, why did Jesus come and die in the first place?

If there was hope apart from him, why did he come in the first place? It was this, to bear God's wrath, his just wrath for all who would believe in him, who would respond to him to say, that should have been me.

I should have been on that cross. And yet he went there. But it's not enough to just know those things. There has to be a response. And that's the fourth part of this response.

God commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins. Not other people, not worrying about other people, your sin.

[15 : 24] He says, repent of your sin and trust in Jesus in order to be saved. I sometimes use the analogy of the five finger gospel as a way that you can't remember this.

You can remember this on your hand. Jesus died for my sins. Jesus died for my sins. It's a really helpful, powerful way to remember that we need someone to substitute themselves, not just anyone, someone who's able to take on the punishment of God.

Jesus died for, as a substitute for, not just anyone's sins, but my sins. This is the posture of a response to what God has done.

So if this is all true, then the Bible is not just a story of great men and women that we're trying to be more like. Like, I need to be more brave like David or something like that.

It's actually a story. The whole story is about sinful men and women and a very patient God. If you read the Bible through that lens, it's going to change everything for you because it points us to our need for a Savior and the provision of a Savior.

[16 : 40] So that is an overview of do you understand the gospel? That's our first question. The second question is this.

Do you believe the gospel? Do you believe the gospel? So true belief in the gospel is more than understanding the message of the gospel. True belief in the gospel is marked by a response of repentance and faith.

Repentance and faith. So the gospel is called the good news. And we saw that in a couple of texts earlier. This is what is being preached by both of those guys in Acts 2, Acts 8.

So it's called the good news. And our response to this indicates whether or not we truly understand the good news. So, I mean, you think about the analogy of if I told you that the house was on fire.

Wake up in the middle of the night. I'm like, hey, Eric, the house is on fire. And if you just rolled over and remained in the house, it would show that you didn't understand the message.

[17 : 43] Because if you understood the message, we'd both be getting out of there as quick as we could, right? There's a response that happens when you understand the message.

In Acts 2, back to our original text that we looked at earlier, it says, I'll read it again. Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart.

They were understanding the message. And not only did they understand the message, Peter said to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And they do it. They respond to it. They respond to the message. So that's what our response should be. If we believe the gospel, then we should respond with repentance and faith.

Faith is more than believing Jesus is true or real. It's more than that. Because a lot of people believe that Jesus existed.

- [18 : 40] And even that Jesus went to the cross, that's not enough. I used the analogy the other week in one of the sermons. I worked at Outdoor Recreation Youth Camp.
- And I worked the tower. It has like a zip line that goes off of the tower. It's really scary, especially for the first time. And there's this big drop. And you have to like put your feet on the edge of the tower.
- And you have to like sit down and let the harness hold you. Feel the weight be held up by the harness. And you feel the lines start to sag down and things like that.
- And it can make your heart start to flutter. But it's one thing to stand on the ground and be like, yeah, that harness, it works. It's great. It really does. I've seen a bunch of people do it. But it's another thing to be up there on the ledge and put your own weight in the harness and let go of the edge.
- To step off and put your full weight, the full weight of your life, everything into this outside object. You're not in control anymore.
- [19 : 45] This is what it looks like to put our faith in Jesus Christ, to trust him in such a way. It's not just trusting facts about him, but trust our very life.
- We belong to him. Everything's in his hands. He owns us. That's a picture of believing the gospel, not just understanding it, but believing the gospel.
- So by faith, we believe Jesus is the savior of the world. We believe Jesus is not just a savior, but he's our savior. And we place our complete trust in him.
- Another way to think about this, and it's a good question, is Jesus your treasure? When you think about your life, if Jesus was extracted suddenly from your story, would it be any different?
- Is he so precious to you that life without him just would not even be imaginable? Is there value attached to the person of Jesus Christ in your life?
- [20 : 49] Then the second category of repentance. Repentance is literally just a turning from and a turning to. Turning from something, turning towards something.
- So repentance is our continual turning from sin and toward the savior. There's three aspects of this. There's a knowledge of sin, which is admitting personal guilt over sin.
- There's sorrow for sin, which is possessing personal sadness and hatred of sin. I don't want to do those things anymore. I don't want to go back to that old way. I know where that goes.
- I know it leads to a dead end. I want to, I want to turn from that. And you keep turning, you keep turning. Every time there's temptation, you're like, I want to keep going back to the savior. It's better.
- He's better for me. And then there's a confession, you know, an aspect of continual confession. It's not just a one time thing, a one and done. Check the box.
- [21 : 44] I got fire insurance. Now we're talking about, no, like we're putting our trust or hope in him. And anytime we start to feel the tug of the world back this way, we're saying, no, I don't want this anymore.
- Confess my need for you again. My need is fresh today. And you know what the promise is for those who walk in faith and repentance, that he has new morning mercies for you every day, every day.
- It's an incredible relationship that we're invited into. First John 1, 9 says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and he's just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

All the shame, all the things that you did before, all the stuff. He says, I don't see that anymore. Cast as far as the east is from the west because of Christ's righteousness on your behalf.

Repentance is a continual turning from sin. So that's the second question. Do you understand the gospel? Do you believe the gospel personally? The third question is this.

[22 : 51] Do you possess evidence of being born again? That language born again, maybe you've heard that language before. It comes from Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

And Nicodemus is a religious leader. Guys supposedly got it all together, kind of like a pastor almost, you know, a religious leader, straight laced dude. And Jesus is talking to this guy.

And they're having this conversation. And he tells Nicodemus, the righteous looking guy, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

That's a shocking exchange. You know, you think about this is like the straight laced guy. The guy has got all of his stuff together.

And he's saying it doesn't matter. The one question I have for you is, have you been born again? So our faith and repentance is evidence of being born again, being made new into a new person.

[23 : 58] Our faith and repentance is evidence of conversion. That means like a transformation. We were one thing and now we're a new thing. It's being acted upon by God and being brought to saving faith.

John 1 says, but to all who did receive him, there's that receive language again. We saw that earlier. To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

So how do you become a child of God? Is it by doing enough or trying hard enough? Outweighing the bad with the good? Oh, right here, it says to all who did receive him, the good news of the gospel.

There's one who stands in our place. Those are the ones that are transformed, that are born again, made into children of God, brought from being an enemy into the family.

So how do we know if we are children of God? Well, the scriptures actually encourage us to examine ourselves, examine ourselves.

[25 : 05] Second Corinthians 13 five says, examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith, test yourselves. And this isn't meant to be a scary thing. It's actually meant to be an encouraging, affirming, assuring thing.

First John was actually written to help us do the examining, to have some categories. To ask. And first John 5 13, he says, I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

So this is an assurance thing to encourage our hearts. So several marks of the new birth in first John are outlined by John Piper in a wonderful book called Finally Alive.

And so these are taken from that book, but they help us have some traction points, some questions to ask to examine ourselves. So first, those who are born of God keep his commandments. First John 3 24 says, whoever keeps his commandments abides in God means like remains in God and God in him.

So if we're wondering whether we're truly Christians, we should humbly and carefully look for fruit of the spirit in our lives. Fruit of the spirit in our lives.

[26 : 16] Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. It's not saying that these are going to be perfect, but is there change?

Can you see any change in your life since Christ has been your trust and your treasure? Can you see any kind of changes in your heart where I used to just rip into people all the time?

I used to always just like explode in anger. But now there's like a check in my heart and there's like a some form of restraint, a little bit of a even whenever I blow it and I do royally explode.

There's like conviction like, oh, I don't I don't want to be like that. And you have this compulsion to ask for forgiveness and to ask the Lord for forgiveness. Like there's a different kind of response even when you do sin.

So there's fruit that starts to emerge, even if it's buds of fruit, even if it's just starting to flower. Do you see that in your heart, in your life?

[27 : 15] Can you think of moments where you've seen changes? I'm a little I'm different now. That's just not how I used to be. That is one way that we can see a desire to keep his commandments.

So we're not looking for perfect obedience, but a desire for obedience. Before I was a Christian, I didn't care. You know, God's laws, his commandments, pleasing him was not on my mind at all.

I wanted to please myself and anything that got in my way. I'm going to run it over. I don't think that way anymore. I want to please the Lord. That's my default setting.

I want to please him more and more. I want to grow. I want to change. I want to be different. So that's one. Another mark is those who are born of God don't hate others, but love them. First John 2 9.

Whoever says he's in the light, but hates his brother is still in darkness. There's a change towards people.

[28 : 15] These are people God made sinners just like me. I'm not better than anybody. I've received grace. I've received a free gift that I did not earn. And if it's made available to me, it can be made available to anyone.

And so I can't lord it over other people and be like, oh, that idiot over there. I can't believe they're like this. You know, like scoffing and hating on the very people that God created. I'm just like them. There's a change in our hearts that becomes more and more evident.

And over time, you know, there's there's even more patience with people, Lord willing. Third, those who are born of God don't love the world. And I'm not talking about beautiful trees and mountainscapes and vistas and sunrises and whitewater rafting and things like that.

But we're talking about the things that are in opposition to the things of God. Let me just say it that way. So first John 2 15 says, do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. So we can't we can't love the things that God hates and say that we love God at the same time.

[29 : 31] It's impossible. Those things are at war with each other. It wouldn't make any sense. It wouldn't make any sense to be on both sides of the war and say, I just love both of those things.

No, they're in opposition to each other. So if our love for the world is not decreasing, we may not be born of God. That's what that's indicating. That's what that's showing us. Fourth, those who are born of God practice righteousness.

First John 2 29. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him. So those who are born of God, obey God.

They don't just merely believe things about him. It has an impact, has an effect on the way that they walk out and they live it out publicly. We're not we're not embarrassed about this.

If it's really if Christ really is our treasure and he really has changed us and is changing us. And we know what the world had for us before and it was bankrupt and it left us sad and isolated and terribly alone and despairing.

[30 : 34] If we know those things, then why am I so shit? I'm not going to be ashamed of Christ. Even if I'm a minority, I'm not going to be ashamed of of of him in the workplace, for instance, or with my family or with my friends.

There's an illustration here.

How does that date such an important question? And they answered if they were baptized during the time of Soviet rule. They risk their lives to follow Christ and they risk their futures.

Everything is at stake. Their livelihood, their ability to work, their ability to marry, have family. Any climbing the ladder help of any sort was in jeopardy by professing your allegiance to Jesus Christ.

So if they were baptized after the liberation from the Soviets, we have more questions, many more questions to know what they're really like.

[32 : 00] It's it's it's a lot easier to follow whenever everybody else is doing the same thing. You can kind of just blend right in because it's the acceptable social thing to do.

It's one of the dangers of living in the southeast United States and the Bible Belt. It's a lot of people. It's it's popular still. It's like an acceptable, even a helpful thing for business, for marriage, for those types of things.

So the question is, you know, do you want to practice righteousness even when no one else is? Do you want to please God no matter what the cost is? That's a check in our hearts.

Like if if everybody was against me right now and I'm the minority voice in this place, would it still be worth it to you? That's a way to see is am I different?

Do I belong to my child of this family or am I a child of the world? Fifth, those who are born of God don't make a practice of sinning.

[32 : 59] First John three, six, no one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

First John six also says, if we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and we do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his son cleanses us from all sin.

And so it's back to that question of which side of the war are you on? Do you enjoy striding on the enemy side? Is this actually where your pleasure is and your your joy is over here?

Or do you recognize this is where I want to be? This is where I want to walk. This is where I want to serve, serve the most high God. He's my king now. Can't can't straddle the barracks.

Got to be on one side or the other. And the question is, do you hate sin? Is there a fight in your heart against sin? He's going to continue to give you new desires, just like a baby.

[34 : 07] There's babies as they grow. They get their new creations. They're new creatures, but they're also growing and maturing. So it's not are you sinless? That's not the question. But do you have a growing hatred for sin and a growing love for the things that God loves and a desire to grow and mature and walk out with him and for him?

Does that make sense? I'm saying. Yeah, I think a helpful point for parents is is just the question.

Does your child confess sins that you are unaware of? Are there things for you guys that are here? Minors still in your parents house. Are there times whenever.

You recognize me and what I've just done or what I just thought is wrong. I've sinned against God and you confess that not because you got caught, but because you have conviction. That's a that's a helpful category and a good test to ask.

And then six, those who are born of God believe that Jesus is the Christ. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God and everyone who loves the father loves whoever has been born of him.

[35 : 17] So those are just some categories for you when it says examine yourselves, test yourselves. It's just probing certain categories of your life, your heart to see their things.

Are there there evidences of new life, new creation, who you belong to? So those are the first three questions. Do you understand the gospel?

Do you believe the gospel? Are there evidences of new birth being born again in your life? Fourth question. Finally, baptism, baptism. Do you understand the meaning and purpose of baptism?

So baptism is what we call a sacrament that's given to the church, something for us to carry out as church leadership, to protect, to guard the church that Jesus Christ loves.

And by church, we're talking about people, the family of God. That's what we're talking about. So as such, it's a ceremony or a ritual that the church observes as a sign or a symbol of God's grace in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[36 : 26] So we believe that there's ultimately two sacraments in the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. And we observe those regularly. But they kind of display a similar thing, the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ, being united with them.

But baptism is a one time thing. And Lord's Supper is an ongoing, recurring thing that we continue to remind ourselves what Christ has done for us. And so baptism, if you think about it this way, represents the gospel in visible form.

It represents all that we said about who Jesus is and what he's done for us in a visible form. Romans 6 says this. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

There's that born again language, newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Do you see the symbolism there? It's really beautiful. It's rich symbolism. And so you have this picture of the gospel of Jesus dying for sinners going down into the earth, put in a tomb.

[37 : 52] But then wonderfully, gloriously, he's vindicated by God, the judge himself, by being brought back to life. God, the judge is for him and he receives all the dues that he pays and says credited to anyone who believes in his account.

He's raised up to new life. And so that's the image. And what we're doing in baptism, when we go down underneath the water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we're being raised back up, it's displaying this union with Christ's death and then his glorious resurrection to new life.

We're dead to our old selves. Eric goes down into that water. The old Eric's left in the grave, the new Eric's united with Jesus Christ to live for him and through him forever, forever.

That's what that picture is intended to be. So the church, the church is commanded to baptize new believers in order to continue to uphold and proclaim the gospel.

And you've seen it. If you've been here on a Sunday morning, our giant baptismal over here, it's intended to provoke the question, what does this mean?

[39 : 08] What is going on in this ceremony? So I remember as a kid watching that over and over again, like asking my parents, what is that? It's intended to provoke the question, where am I in relation to this man, Jesus Christ?

That's what it's intended to do. Continue to proclaim the gospel. So secondly, our baptism represents our understanding and receiving of gospel grace.

So it symbolizes the forgiveness we have received. I'm just trying to clarify. It's not washing away sin, but it is symbolizing in a glorious way, a way that fortifies our faith and encourages us that our sin has been paid for.

Finally, at the cross, when we trusted in Jesus Christ, that's what it's intended to show us and remind us of. It symbolizes the forgiveness we have received.

Our sins have been washed away and we have been cleansed. That's what Titus 3 tells us. It also symbolizes our union with Christ and his death and resurrection.

[40 : 22] Like I mentioned earlier, going down, being raised again. And it's not just a one-time thing. The symbol is intended to display a new life pattern that I no longer live on my own and for myself.

I live with Christ and for Christ. That's what that's intended to show. And then the third aspect of this is that it receiving baptism is a sign that something has happened to us.

It's like this wedding ring here. It is an outward expression of an inward reality. Something is already happening. But I have received the word and been changed.

And then this is an outside display. Baptism is an outside display. So you can think of it like a marriage ceremony. This does not make me married. I could slip this and give it to him.

It doesn't make him married just by putting the ring on. In a similar way, just going in the water and coming back up. It's not something that's affecting salvation.

[41 : 23] But it is displaying salvation. Something wonderful has occurred. And it's intended to encourage you and strengthen you by God's grace.

Third, is baptism is a testimony of what God has done in you and a blessing to you? First is this category of being a testimony. So being baptized is a testimony to God.

Saying, God, I want to give you everything. It's an outward display of just saying what's already happened in your heart. I want to give you everything. I want to show that I'm giving you everything.

But it also is a testimony to the church. And this is one that can be a little awkward. Especially if you're not one that likes to be in the limelight at all. It challenges both people that like to be in the limelight and people who don't like to be in the limelight.

For people who do, that are really outgoing and on the stage all the time. It forces them to humble themselves and point the finger to Jesus Christ. This is not about me.

[42 : 26] This is about my Savior. He's done something I couldn't do. But it also forces the people who are scared, maybe shy, to face their fear of other people in a really glorious way.

Because in a lot of ways, it's the first step publicly to say, It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. I belong to God.

I will lay down my life because he's already laid down his life for me. What love can surpass that? Why am I so afraid of all these people? They're here to encourage me and celebrate and rejoice with me.

And then, most wonderfully, to walk with me forward in this new faith, in this new life. It's an invitation in a lot of ways, kind of like a wedding, where we do it in front of a lot of people.

And it's a covenant that we're making. And we're inviting people that we know and love to help us in our marriage. In a very similar way, we're asking people to help us in our new relationship with the living God.

[43 : 31] We want help. And these people are here to celebrate with us and to walk forward with us from this time forward. So it's a testimony to those people as well. I want you in my life to walk with.

And then, lastly, it's a testimony to yourself. You've become a disciple of Jesus Christ, and you're telling the whole world. You're telling the whole world.

It's a public identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. So that's a testimony aspect of baptism. And then the final category of that testimony is that it's also a blessing to you personally.

Wayne Grudem, a theologian, he said it this way. It is a sign of the believer's death and resurrection with Christ. And it seems fitting that the Holy Spirit would work through such a sign to increase our faith, to increase our experiential realization of death to the power and love of sin in our lives, and to increase our experience of the power of new resurrection life in Christ that we have as believers.

So all of that's going on. And it's like I said, when you're shaking on the edge of the tower and getting ready to jump, in a similar way, it's a very visceral, physical expression. And you're feeling the water, and you're going under, and you have to hold your breath.

[44 : 50] It feels like you're dying. And you come up, and then you just have grace from the Lord to encourage you, and a reference point to point back to.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for this. It fortifies my strength, my faith going forward. So those are the four questions. I told you we get to baptism.

It's in there. But like I said, there's a progression that we wanted to ask. If you can answer yes to those four questions, then you may be ready to be baptized.

And we'd love to be able to have more conversation with you. So this is intended to be a springboard to conversation. And so just as far as next steps, what do you do from here?

If you feel like I answered yes to those things, and I want to move forward, I have a clear understanding of what it means to be baptized in this church, you can fill out.

[45 : 49] There's a baptism request form on the church website, and you can access that there. There's the info for that. Pretty simple. And we'll get back in touch with you very soon.

We do have a baptism that's coming up in February. And so we can begin the conversation. But there's not pressure. So if we need to, like, take our time and have, like, just go through more questions that you might have or anything like that, there's not pressure to, like, okay, we've got to make the February date.

There's going to be other baptisms along the way, too. So that's just the next one. And we can start the conversation whenever you're ready. So let me pray for you, and then I can stick around and answer any questions you might have at this point.

Oh, Lord, we do thank you for the gift and the grace of baptism and what it points to, Lord. The gospel understood and believed the transforming gospel grace of Jesus Christ who stood in our place, taken on our debt, given us his righteousness so we could be received into your presence forever.

What a glorious privilege to be able to talk about these things this morning. I pray that you help those that are in here listening, asking questions, pondering.

[47 : 08] Lord, I pray that you give them discernment, give them wisdom. I pray if they haven't responded to the gospel, that today would be the day that they trust in you. Lord, thank you for all that you've done, all that you're going to do.

And we ask for your help now. In Jesus' name, amen. All right. Here I am. So let me know if you've got any questions.

Thank you. Yeah, thanks for coming. Thank you. You're welcome. You're welcome.