

Going Public

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Note: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, or word usage.

Well, as Joel mentioned a few minutes ago, today we're gonna talk about baptism. And though that may not sound like the most exciting topic, I'm gonna make it exciting for you, but you're gonna have to put on your thinking caps today. And for those of you who are watching online, you may wanna get something to write on and maybe contact a friend, tell them about this message because if you're a Christian or if you grew up in any kind of Christian church, you have an opinion about baptism, don't you? In fact, not only do you have an opinion, your opinion is shaped almost entirely not by your study or by your capacity to take in all different views, but your view of baptism and mine as well has been almost entirely shaped by the tradition that we grew up in. And the reason I wanted to talk about this today is because baptism's like a really big deal around here, and if you're at one of our Atlanta area campuses or you watch this online or you're part of our strategic partner network, you know what a big deal baptism is, and so I wanted to make sure that all of us were thinking about it the same way. But ultimately my goal today is, if I could let you know what my secret agenda is, my secret agenda, that's not so secret, is if you're a Christian and you've never been baptized, I want you to be baptized.

01:03 S1: And hopefully after the next few minutes of talking about this you will be a little bit more motivated to do so. But this can also be a very a emotional topic, and the reason it's emotional for some people is because of the way we were raised. And then when you bump into somebody who does something differently than the way you were taught was right, we get a little bit defensive about that and I completely understand that. I grew up Baptist, and so since Baptist was in our name, I assumed we did it right. 'Cause we were Baptist. I mean, so who could baptize different than us? We had it in our name. What is a Presbyterian anyway? What is a Methodist? What's a Episcopalian? We're the Baptists, so I just assumed that all the other denominations did it wrong, because we're Baptist, okay? So your tradition is a little bit like that, if you were raised Catholic, you were raised to... You were taught, and have been taught, and the Catholic teaches, that baptism is a part of salvation. So consequently, Catholics tend to baptize babies really, really early. In fact, one of the interesting conversations we have a on a pretty frequent basis at all of our churches is people will call, generally it's a grandmother, sometimes it's a mom, but a grandmother will call and say, "My daughter had a baby and we need to get our baby baptized, will you do that?"

02:08 S1: And so we ask questions, and here's what we generally find. We find that this is an individual that neither them nor their daughter attend our church. In fact, they don't generally attend any church, they're not involved in any kind of religious community, but, "Oh my gosh, I have a granddaughter. Oh my gosh, I have a son or a daughter, and we gotta get them in." So consequently, there's this... So we have wonderful conversations, but it almost gets to the point where it's kinda superstitious. It's like, "Well, I'm not a church person. I don't read my Bible, I'm not really involved in local... But oh my gosh, I'm afraid of what's gonna happen to my daughter or my little son." So we're gonna talk a little bit about that as well, so it can even be emotional. But the reason, in all Christian organizations or all Christian churches, baptism is a part of what we do, even though we do it differently, we do it at different times and different stages of life. The reason is because of something Jesus said, it's one of his most famous statements, I would say it's not as famous as John 3:16, but it's close to John 3:16, especially if you grew up in church.

03:04 S1: Here's what he said at the end of his ministry that kinda cues us into how important baptism is, he said this, he's talking to all of his guys, and he says this, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, all people groups." And here's our word, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Now, when you've been a part of baptism and you've heard that little formula, "In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy spirit," you thought that was just some kinda cool church little thing we threw in there. But Jesus said, "No, this is my formula. When you baptize people, I want it to be in God's name." Which we would expect that, and then this was almost heretical, "And I want you to baptize them in my name." Wow. "And in the name of the Holy Spirit." So in other words, wherever churches are planted, wherever people embrace Jesus, part of that personal transition, part of that process is, "I want people to be baptized." Now, that's where all Christians agree, that people should be baptized. After this verse, it gets