

FOR: LINDA

GROUP GUIDE MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

If you had to pick just one kind of fruit to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?

SHARE

This week's message is to prepare us for the upcoming baptism services. If you have ever attended a Baptism service at Red Rocks, you were probably impacted by the stories of life change. Every story is a picture of God's grace and power at work in people's lives.

Red Rocks Church practices and teaches that once a person becomes a believer and a disciple of Christ, he or she should be baptized. Baptism and communion are the two things that have been commanded by Jesus Christ as visible symbols of God's invisible grace that have great symbolic meaning for believers.

With both practices, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection and our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ. It is a powerful reminder of God's goodness and grace.

What a person believes about baptism is of utmost importance and we need to be clear about what baptism is and what it is not. Who should be baptized? When should they be baptized? How should they be baptized? All of these questions are answered as we reflect upon what baptism means. Baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death and depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

Read Acts 2:37-41, Matthew 28:18-20:

Where do we get the commandment that we are supposed to baptize people?

Why is repentance or turning away from sin important before being baptized?

Was there one part of Linda's story that was memorable to you and why?

GROW

There are some who will falsely argue that without baptism, a person is not saved. This is what could be considered a works-based salvation, meaning that a person needs to do something to merit salvation.

However, there is no evidence of this in scripture. Some will say that John 3 states that unless a person is "born of water and the Spirit" he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Many point to this as evidence of the necessity of baptism. However, nothing in the context suggests that Jesus is speaking of baptism. Rather, He is alluding to the promise of the New Covenant in Ezekiel 36, which speaks of both "water" and "Spirit." Therefore, Jesus is saying that "new birth" or "regeneration" is necessary for salvation, not baptism. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone. God is promising in Ezekiel that he will cleanse us, wash us and give us a new heart, a new spirit in those who believe. This is precisely what Jesus was talking about in John 3. We can also affirm this as considering the whole of scripture and the overwhelming amount of language that supports that salvation is by grace alone, through faith in Christ and not by works.

Ezekiel 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Read Romans 10:9-13

How would you describe a person with a heart of stone or a hard heart?

When God changes someone's heart, how does scripture describe the change?

What is the good news in both of these verses?

All the Israelite army (Saul included) were focused on Goliath's size and physical ability. Relying on their own ability and strength they knew that there was no way they would last a minute in combat with him. It's almost as if the fact that David isn't a warrior and doesn't have combat skills to rely on that allows him to see this fight differently.

MOVE

It is truly a miracle to see what God does in the lives of people, especially in our own lives. God pursues us, takes away our sins, and gives us a new heart and life in which we become

ministers of reconciliation. God chooses us to partner with him to share the good news of Jesus Christ. There are times as Pastors where we will hear people complain about how the church these days isn't deep enough intellectually. However, when people are submerged under the water in baptism, and spring up out of the water, it doesn't get much deeper than that. That is the Gospel message.

Romans 6:3–4

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

The New American Commentary explains the importance of baptism:

But death and burial are not the end of the story. In God's redemptive plan burial is followed by resurrection. As Christ was raised from the dead in a manifestation of the Father's glorious power, so also are we raised to an entirely new way of living. The cross has as its ethical purpose a change in conduct. The Greek expression translated "a new life" is better rendered "a new sphere which is life." Apart from Christ people are dead in their sins (Eph 2:1). But raised from the dead through faith in Christ, they enter an entirely new sphere of existence. They are alive in Christ. As Jesus promised, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Although contemporary use has tended to trivialize the expression "born again," the vibrant reality of new life in Christ is still portrayed most graphically by the metaphor of spiritual birth. The lives of believers are to be as different from their preconversion days as life is from death.

How do we see the baptism as a symbolic identification with Christ's death and resurrection?

Each of us who are followers of Christ walk in "newness of life;" how would you describe your life since coming to Christ?

Regardless of how long we have been Christians, we all struggle, what is one area in your life that you need God to give you "newness of life" in?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Galatians 3:27

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(Note to Leaders: There will not be a LG Leader's Guide this week.)