

Red Rocks Church



GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

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

What is one interest, hobby, or activity you like to do that most people would not know about you?

SHARE

We are taking a time out from our "Once Upon a Time" series to talk about a topic that is extremely important. This topic is one of the most misunderstood areas of the Christian faith and one that seems like just religious dogma to an outsider. We are talking about baptism. If you attend baptism services, you have most likely heard people's stories of life change, followed by someone walking into the water to be publicly submerged, only to resurface a second later hugging or fist-bumping the person who dunked them. From an outsider's view, this whole thing could seem really strange. Some might be thinking that dunking someone under water in front of a bunch of people could cause a fight to break out.

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 two of the 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, we 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 Matthew 4:18-20:

What is the first thing Jesus asked Simon Peter and his brother?

What do you think it cost those disciples to follow Jesus?

Has it been costly for you to follow Jesus with your own life? If so, how?

Let's Read Acts 2:37-41 and 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?

G R O W

Shawn talked about the importance in the life of a believer to listen, follow, and to obey God in all areas of our lives. For those of us who choose to follow Christ, one of those areas where we should listen, follow, and obey God's command is the decision to be baptized.

As we all know, no one is perfect; but we can all still make the decision to follow Jesus in every area of our lives. Each of us has the opportunity to release control and trust that what God asks us to do will lead to fullness of life. For some of us, we seem to excel at being charitable or volunteering, but struggle with trusting God with our relationships. Maybe you find yourself devoted to God's word, reading, daily devotionals, but won't trust God with your finances or career. It is easy to compartmentalize our lives; yet our Lord asks us to trust and follow him.

As Shawn stated, we need to ask the question *am I listening, following, and obeying God with my whole life?* In Luke 6, we see Jesus encourage his listeners to trust God in every area of life because He will be the rock solid foundation that will lead to an unshakeable life no matter what storms may come.

Read Luke 6:46-49

How does Jesus describe the person who trusts him and puts into practice the truth?

Both the person who built the house on a rock foundation and the one who built on sand worked hard to build their homes. From the outside, the homes probably looked the same. So why did one get destroyed by the storm?

Can you personally relate to one of the builders? If so, what did your experience teach you about God?

M O V E

When we listen, follow, and obey, God promises us that it will lead to a full life built on a firm foundation that will not be moved when difficulties and troubles hit us. As believers, we are asked to trust God. Are we willing to follow in the footsteps of Jesus? Are we willing to believe that where Jesus goes will lead us into greater peace, purpose, and into the newness of life?

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.¹³ 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.

Have you been baptized already as a believer? If so, how would you encourage someone who might be nervous or unsure of baptism?

If you have already made a decision to follow Jesus, but haven’t been baptized yet, what has been holding you back from doing it? What would help you feel more comfortable doing it?

If you have decided to get baptized, who do you think you could invite that needs to see and hear your story?

P R A Y

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.

T O G O

Galatians 3:27

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