

May 9, 2021 Pastor James
Creating Community Series: The Importance of Baptism

The definition of community according to Acts 4:32-35. *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.*

God created community beginning in Genesis and the oneness expressed through the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Acts tells us the outcome of community - of people living in community. **Acts 2:43-47** *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Community as the world defines has a common interest, proximity, or purpose. This type of community will only be a shadow and will leave a sense of longing. Like social media, it doesn't satisfy. There is a challenge with this passage in Acts... *and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.* But when we look at the product without understanding the process, it leaves something to be desired in parts of each one of us. We tend to see what we are losing instead of what we are gaining.

So what is this process of community? In the day of Pentecost, **Acts 2** shows what God had done. Peter began to preach with clarity of who Jesus was and what Jesus had done. The people were consumed by his words. **Acts 2:36-38** *Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* They were pierced to the heart and asked, "Brothers, what are we to do?" Have you been at one of those experiences where you've come out of a difficult time or a revelation and asked what am I supposed to do now with the information that I have?

Peter responds in **Acts 2:38** *Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Community comes as a result of these words. Repent means to turn around - to go in the opposite direction. Sometimes instead of turning around and following Jesus, we ask Jesus to follow us. Some of us are unwilling to change. Repentance requires change and is the first step to experience community as God calls us to. It's more than asking Jesus to come along. It's following Jesus and it's the beginning to community.

Then believers will want to take the next step and be baptized. Baptism is a part of being in community. If you have not been baptized as a believer, you need to be baptized. What is your reason for not being baptized? It is a simple act of obedience of following Christ. It is the public confessing of what Christ has done for us, declaring a new life, and a welcoming in of believers around us. Baptism is not salvation but it is an integral part of walking out the obedience of our faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* **Romans 10:9** *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Salvation comes when we confess Jesus as Lord.*

Baptism says to the world around that we are under a new covenant. It is similar to a wedding ring. The ring serves as notice, a physical sign, to others that we belong to another. Baptism is a sign of belonging to God - that we understand what He did for us. Scripture tells us that those who believed were baptized. What is baptism? It means fully submerged. It is the beautiful picture of what Christ did for us.

Why be baptized? **Matthew 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* To make a disciple means to baptize and to teach them.

Luke 12:8 *Now I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before people, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God.* **Luke 6:46** *Now why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? We should be baptized because Jesus commands it and it shows we are following Him. Who is baptism for? It is an expression of faith for the believer who is one who has repented and chosen to follow Jesus and acknowledge all of who Jesus is.*

Why are there so many that believe but have not been baptized? Maybe because they haven't been taught, have too much pride, have a fear of being judged, have been indifferent, or are defiant. Repent and be baptized.

What does repent mean?

Explain why baptism is important.

When did you follow Jesus in baptism? Do you still need to be baptized?