

If you were asked, “What is the point of being baptized if baptism isn’t necessary for salvation?” how would you respond?

4. God’s Rescue and Grace

The sacrament of baptism is the symbol of both our death to the old nature, and of God’s grace offering to rescue us and give us as new life in Christ. We have seen the symbol of water used throughout the bible when God has rescued man and brought us from death to life.

Noah and the flood (Gen 8:13), Exodus from Egypt (Acts 7:36, Exodus 14:21-22), Jonah (Jonah 2:5-6).

As you celebrated with those being baptized this weekend, what did you hear them declare Jesus had rescued them from? Because of their public display of faith, they will now be known as a new creation, a follower of Jesus, and a child of God!

WRAP-UP

This weekend we joined with others in the New Life Family to celebrate three things: we welcomed new members who are committed to growing in their faith with the community of believers at our church, we blessed the children and joined with the parents who dedicated them to God as a church body who will be part of those children’s lives as they grow in faith, and we witnessed the declaration of new life in Christ through baptism.

MEMORY VERSE

4 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. - Romans 12:4-5 NLT

Challenge

Are there areas of your faith that you need to make public through baptism, child dedication or church membership. If God is nudging you in that direction, there will be opportunities again in a few months.

Membership, Dedications, Baptism

Known For It – Celebration Sunday

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of our current sermon series, we have considered what Christians are known for. This week we concluded with a celebration of new church members, child dedications and baptisms. Each is a public statement of what these people want to be known for. Let’s consider the significance and meaning behind church membership, child dedication and baptism.

Ice Breaker

Have you been baptized, completed a membership course, or dedicated a child at New Life? If so share your experience.

Key Passage

1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? 3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. - Romans 6:1-4 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is a Church Member?

4 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. - Romans 12:4-5 NLT

The church is not a building. It is the body of Christ, made up of many members. Membership at New Life is officially recognized when you complete a membership class which we call Crash Course. We require this because in Crash Course we explain what our church believes, as well as our denominational beliefs. We are a part of the Nazarene denomination. When you become a member of New Life you also become a member of the Nazarene denomination. We consider membership to be a two-way agreement, or covenant, between the member and the “church” and so we have our new members sign a covenant agreement stating that the church commits to help you understand God’s love, to be shaped into his image, and to begin to do the things that Jesus did. It also states that the member commits to living fully alive in Jesus through the community of New Life.

What kinds of projects or organizations have you been involved with where it is vital to know the commitment level of your participants? What difference do you think it makes for someone to commit to membership rather than to being a regular attender of a church?

2. Child Dedication

10 Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD. 11 And she made this vow: "O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut." - 1 Samuel 1:10-11 NLT

21 Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. 22 Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. - Luke 2:21-22 NLT

Child dedication is an act of parents who bring their child before the church congregation to publicly declare that the child belongs to God and that the parents desire to raise their child to understand and follow the things of God. Child dedication is both a public commitment of the parents, and a public blessing of the child.

What ways do you think the parents of dedicated children can ensure that their child is introduced to God from an early age? What role do you feel the other members of the church play in the lives of that family?

3. What is Baptism?

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! -

2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT

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In Rom 6:2 Paul says we have died to sin. Our old sinful nature died when we accepted Jesus as our Lord. (2 Cor 5:17) This doesn’t mean we will never sin, but that sin does not characterize our way of life, and it is against the nature of our “new life” to sin. In fact, in Romans 6 verses 3 and 4 we see that baptism is itself a symbol of putting that sinful nature to death under the water and rising to that new life in Christ. We aren’t just cleaned up versions of our old self, we are a totally new creation.

Many of us have thought of baptism as “washing away our sins”. While it is true, we are cleansed of our sin, how does the image of washing differ from the idea of dying? Why do you feel it was necessary to die to the old nature rather than clean it up? Why is it important for us to declare our faith in Jesus through public baptism?

The more we learn about God’s grace, His sacrifice and His amazing love for us, the more we are compelled to respond. But we don’t respond in order to maintain God’s favor. We cannot earn His love, and we do not gain salvation by our works. It is not baptism that saves us. In Romans 6:1, Paul asks the rhetorical question, “Should we keep on sinning so God can show more grace?” That grace offered to us came at the price of Christ’s life, suffering and death.