

TOB BAPTISM CELEBRATION @ Willowgrove!
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WHY WOULD ANYONE DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

Colossians 2:12-15

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1. There's a standard phrase that is hard-wired into every child that is born onto this planet. I'm not sure where they get it—but they *all* know it—and use it every time they do something weird.

-Let me set this up; have you ever watched America's Funniest Videos? I *love* that show—and will sit, like a fool, and laugh my head off. If you've ever watched what kids do—it's both amazing and bizarre. I've seen kids eat frogs and bugs—and stuff a live fish into their mouths! One kid stuffed all his toys into his diaper. Another kid got into a can of paint—and painted his *entire* bedroom—dresser, bed, walls, mirror—and then painted himself.

-Another little girl did her whole face with magic markers. Hair-cutting? Cutting off big chunks of your little sisters or little brothers hair? That's *standard* stuff! As a kid, I remember finding a bottle of children's aspirin—you know, the orange-flavoured stuff? I liked the taste—so I ate a whole bunch of them!

- a. Here's the phrase that is hard-wired into kids brains. If you ask them, *Why? Why did you do that?* The standard answer for *every* kid I've ever met or heard of is... *I don't know?*

-Ralphie, why did you stuff peanuts and raisins up your nose? *I don't know!*

-Freddie, why did you make Stacey get down on all fours and eat the dog's food out of his dish? *I don't know!*

-Annie, why did you take the garden hose and fill up Auntie Liz's convertible with water? *I don't know!*

-Here's what I suspect. Moments before they're born, an angel comes to them and says, "Okay, kid, here's the scoop. When you get down there, you're going to do some very strange things—and get in trouble a lot in the first years of your life. So—when the big scary adult—named Mom...or Dad...or Principal—asks you *why* you did it—just say, *I don't know. I don't know!*

- b. But it's not only kids that do strange things, is it? We see it in the news every day. "Mr. Weiner—why did you take pictures of yourself and send them out into cyberspace?" "Ms. Lohan, why do

you keep doing stuff that gets you into trouble?” And sometimes that question circles back around to me and you, right? **Why?** And the answer? **Mmmm. That’s a tough one. I don’t know!**

2. That really brings us around to what’s happening this morning, doesn’t it? Baptism has been around for a long time—so it’s somewhat familiar. But when look at it from a total outsider’s perspective—you have to admit—it **does** seem weird! Adults standing in water—having other adults dip them in water in front of others. People clapping and cheering—sometimes crying. **Why? Why would people do something like that—get wet in front of other people?**

-Well, the **short** answer to that question is that being baptized is an act of obedience to Jesus. It’s very clear from Jesus’ **own** actions and what He said that baptism is a critical part of following Him. **He** was baptized; **He** baptized others; and He told his followers to be baptized and to baptize everyone else who chose to follow Him and become a part of His Kingdom—His gatherings.

-Let me take some of the mystery out of it. Baptize is a word that is pretty much used only in circles of Christ-followers. **Baptizo** is a Greek word that simply means to **dip** or **dunk** something in a liquid. It came out of the dying industry—where someone would dip cloth in a vat of dye—and it would come up a different color. The reason the word never really got translated into English—but simply yanked out of the Greek—is that by the time the English Bible was translated, they had been sprinkling children for years. To simply **translate** the word had serious implications. So...they **didn’t!**

-What I’d like to do, if it’s okay, is just talk about the meaning behind what it means to be baptized—and why these people have chosen to take this step today.

- a. The first is the water itself. What would water be a symbol of in our world? **Life.** Water is what distinguishes Earth from every other planet, star, asteroid—or anything else out there. Ever seen a land that has been without water for years? **Everything** dies. Without water, there’s no plant life, no crops, no animal life—and certainly, no human life. Water is what keeps this planet habitable, beautiful, colourful.
- b. So, maybe the next question is—if the symbolism is about **life**—why don’t people being baptized **drink** the water instead of getting dunked in it? Well, it’s because of the symbolism of being **washed** in it.

-I don't know if you knew this, but outside of this magnificent temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem about 900 B.C., there was this massive bronze bowl—15 feet across, 7 ½ feet deep—called “The Sea.”

It sat on the backs of 12 bronze bulls. It was a work of art! They used it to keep 10 smaller basins filled with water. Know why? Every person who approached God had to wash before they did.

-It wasn't because God is neat-freak or germ Nazi—and is offended by people who smell like BO and have dirty under their nails. It's symbolic of a heart and a life that has been washed clean.

- c. That's what baptism, at the core, is all about. When those being baptized go under the water—it symbolizes their identification with Jesus' death and burial. By the way, water can bring death, can't it—especially if you're under the surface for any length of time. That's why people are sometimes terrified of it. Jesus, to neutralize the death we should die—died, stayed dead, and was buried.

-In Jesus' world, the Romans would always crucify people in a very public place. Over their heads would be wooden shingle—on which the soldiers would write the charges against the person being crucified. Here's the amazing fact:

For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He cancelled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross. (Colossians 2:12-15 NLT)

-Do you understand what this is saying? The entire record of charges against me—all the shameful things I've ever done in my life—were nailed to the top of Jesus' cross and **He** paid for them. See, the only claim Satan has on my life—and yours—is our guilt; our sin. Without that—he has **no** claim over me. I now belong to Jesus—because of what he has done.

- d. After David sinned with Bathsheba, got her pregnant—and then had her husband killed to cover it all up, he came to God and asked for His forgiveness. He said:

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:7 NLT)

-I met earlier with everyone being baptized, and I asked them to write down everything they were most ashamed of on a piece of paper, then wad it up, throw it in a can with *lots* of lighter fluid. Then we burned it—and as it still smoked—we took communion—and celebrated the fact that when **God** forgives—it's washed away. Other people may bring it up, blame us, shame us—but the One who counts most has made us clean—and made us his.

-The cost on doing that? Priceless. He gave us Son for **our** failure—for the sake of the world. Know why? Because He, as God, personifies love—and was **glad** to do it!

3. There's another really important fact. Baptism represents a brand new start. Anyone here have any regrets? Have you ever thought, "Wow—I wish I had another shot at life." Sometimes life has a way of stacking mistake on mistake on mistake. I mean, think about it—we're a lot like kids. We do dumb things—sometimes, things that are pure evil, full of spite, anger, selfishness. If someone were to ask us, "Why did you do that?"—we'd probably give the little kid answer, "I don't know. It seemed like a good idea at the time..."

-It's not just Anthony Weiner and Casey Anthony and who need a do-over. We all do. Jesus once told a prominent religious leader—a really good guy—that he needed born all over again. Wouldn't it be great to just start over? That's what Jesus offers. A do-over. A fresh start—a clean slate. As Jesus put it once, a **new birth**.

-Interesting, isn't it—that water is connected with every human birth. What's the comment most Mother's make right before they give birth? "Oops! My water broke!" As we develop, we are carried in this pouch of fluid that keeps us warm and protects us from getting bumped—that is, until Mom starts doing jumping jacks! Then we're born **wet!** And **everything** is new! We come out of the water—and suck air into our lungs for the very first time. We are held—and kissed—and fed for the very first time.

-We've given a lot of grace—because it takes time to adjust, doesn't it. Shoot, it takes us a year to learn to walk—and another year to learn to talk—and another year, sometimes more, to get potty trained. To drive? Sometimes we **never** learn! Baptism is about getting a fresh start!

4. There's one more thing about baptism—and you may not like this one. Know what it is? Let me put it this way; how many of you like to **humble**

yourselves? Like, for you to go up to someone and say, “Hey, I was **way** off target!” or “What I said was way too critical and condescending!” or “**You** were totally right and **I** was totally wrong!” or, “I will publicly admit to everyone that I lied to save my scrawny neck!”

-Baptism is, in some ways, **humbling**. Baptism, at the core, means admitting that you can’t save your own soul; you can’t give yourself spiritual life; that you can’t change your ways; that you can’t mend things between you and God. Baptism—finding new life means admitting, ***I can’t live my life that way it ought to be lived on my own! Jesus, I NEED YOU!***

-And Jesus said as much. His disciples were just as cocky and self-confident as we sometimes tend to be. And He said to them,

I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sin and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. So anyone who becomes as *humble* as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 18:3-4 NLT)

-And make no mistake about it—it **is** humbling. Know why? Because pride is what initially wrecked our relationship with God—and, to be honest, it is what keeps most people from God. Jesus said—and the entire message of the Bible says—that pride kills—but those who **humble** themselves will be exalted. There are few things more humbling than telling people that you need God—and then entrusting yourself into the hands of others to go under the water and come up wet. I mean, unless you’re bald—**no** one’s hair looks cool when it’s wet.

-I can understand why infant baptism became so popular. No offense intended, but when someone baptizes you as an infant—you can’t even remember it. Even if you see pictures of yourself as this naked baby—peeing into the baptismal font—you think, “It’s okay! I was just a little kid!” But in our world, adults put it off. It seems awkward. We think secret thoughts like, “What will people **think?** What will people **expect?**” So, we put it off—thinking, “There will surely be a **better** day—you know, maybe **next** year!”

-But when we humble ourselves, and we set aside all our pride and excuses and fears and **what if’s**—and say, “I’m going to just go for it!” something surprising happens. Something more powerful than we’d ever think. God shows up. It’s like all of Heaven assembles in the grandstands. When you go public, it’s like you’ve joined hands with all these people who span 2000 years—some of whom have laid everything on the line to follow Jesus!

-And when you do—you make a statement to your friends, to a world system that obsessed with being cool, and to the powers of darkness Jesus defeated, “I have chosen to follow Jesus. I have believed the Good News that Jesus has given his life to make all people and all things right. He was not ashamed to die for me; I am not ashamed to go public for Him!”