Transcript	EP3 Why is Baptism is a Discipleship Issue? resources.gracechurchsc.org/podcasts/the-why-behind-discipleship

Transcription results:

00:04	Hey there. My name is Chris Rivers, and I want to thank you for joining us for the Why Behind Discipleship Podcast. The goal of this podcast is to address discipleship issues in the life of Grace Church and discuss how to be more fully devoted to God. In this episode, Scott Mozingo and I chat with Chris McGowan about the topic of baptism. Chris serves as the pastor of Creative and Communications and is also a shepherding elder at Grace.
00:29	Be sure to check out the podcast page at gracechurchesc. Orgwidecipleship. On this page, you can access a summary of this episode and additional resources to help you move towards discipleship. Okay, let's jump into this episode of the Why Behind Discipleship Podcast. Scott, great to see you today, man. Hey, Chris, good to be here. Yeah. And Chris, good to see you, man. Good to see you as well, Chris. And you and I have had the pleasure of working together for a long time.
00:56	And one of the things I've always appreciated about you is how much you champion baptism for our Church body. And so why don't you just tell us, as we think about being a disciple, a follower of Jesus? Why is baptism so important in that process? Definitely. Well, I'm passionate about all things worship, and baptism definitely falls in that category. It's one of the ways that we get to visibly worship God in our services.
01:24	And so that's one of the main reasons I'm excited about it, because we get to sing and do a lot of other things. But baptism is both personal and public, and it's just so powerful when you get to observe that in our services. And you mentioned a few different reasons. If people are thinking about how they grow their devotion to God and their devotion to others, baptism fits that paradigm as well. We might not think about it quite that way, but how does someone coming forward to be baptized?
01:56	How do you see that really helping grow those two things? There are three ways that I think of baptism, and these aren't outlined in the Bible as one, two, three. But they kind of stand out to me. And that is to be baptized for Jesus, for myself and for others. And I can explain a little bit what I mean. The first one for Jesus, I think, is the most important one because everything we do is for Jesus, and he calls us to be baptized.
02:24	And you see that throughout scripture even see Jesus being baptized in Matthew three. And when John the Baptist is like, oh, no, not me. Like, you should be baptizing me. Jesus basically says, well, this is the

way that we fulfill what the Father has asked us to do, right? Even Jesus was subject to the commands and the will of the Father as we see through scripture. So I think we would say first and foremost what the Bible commands us to do, correct that's right.

02:51 Even if you don't understand the why, what is still there, like Jesus called us to do it. And discipleship is about growing to be more like Christ, and that starts with just obeying him. And so there are certain things in life as a Christian that if you can't take the simple step of just saying, okay, this is what he said to do and follow him in that, then the harder things are going to be even more confusing and hard for you to do. Yeah, that's a great point.

03:19 And so baptism is one of those steps of obedience where you're demonstrating life change. And your first big idea is that we're doing it to honor the word of God. That's right. Awesome. So you mentioned two other aspects that are important to discipleship related to baptism. What were those so after for Jesus? I'd say for myself. And I don't mean that in a self serving kind of way, but it does a few things for you.

03:48 One, it's a stamp in time that you can look back on and say, I publicly identified as a follower of Jesus on that date. I'm not saying that's the date I became a follower of Jesus. Right. But it is something that happened at a concrete in time that you can say, hey, I made that statement in front of people, and that in some ways is a form of accountability in itself to remind you, OK, now this is who I am. My identity is Christ. It's not me.

04:15 And when things get tough, I can look back and say that is a reminder to me. So those two things are actually coming together at that point. The idea of identity, I have a new identity. Before, I used to live for myself. Now I live for Christ. And then this is a moment when I'm declaring that that's right. And before we get to the other piece, I am reminding myself I am declaring this to myself so that I can remember the Bible talks a lot about remembrances.

04:47 Would it be fair to talk about baptism in the same way that the Bible talks about other acts of remembrances? Yeah. I think it would be fair to look at baptism as an Ebenezer, and that's a little bit of a strange word. We don't use it hardly in any context other than in the Church and at Grace. The way we see that is in the song Comedyofault, you talk about raising your Ebenezer and what that is basically is a monument. It is a reminder of something.

05:15 And so an example of that for my family is when my second son, Cohen, was born, there were a lot of complications, and there's a long story related to his pregnancy and birth and life. But God answered some prayers for us and reminded us that he is the one that's in control. And so we have what I consider an Ebony's are right outside of our side door where we come and go every day. It's just this little stone with a verse from Isaiah that reminds us that God is good and he does wonderful things, and that all comes from him.

05:46 And so if you're a guest in our house, you might walk past that and wonder, I wonder why that's there. It gives an opportunity for us to

tell a little bit of that story. But more than that, it reminds our family that God is good and we can trust them. So you have this daily reminder, this milestone, if you will. That's symbolic, right? We're not saying that baptism saves you, but it's definitely a reminder of the work of Grace in your life.

06:12 If you wanted to go into the scriptures, first Samuel seven is where you could read a little bit more about what Chris is talking about here with the Ebeniser. So if you have Jesus and you have yourself, and then how does this work as a witness for other people? The third aspect is for others, and others honestly has two sides to it. If you think of the Myself piece that we just talked about, when you're baptized, there are others around you and you're inviting them into your spiritual growth.

06:39 You're saying, I'm a father of Jesus and I need your help and I'm a father of Jesus and I want to help you. So it is self focused as well. But then there is a piece where you are proclaiming the gospel to other people through your baptism. And every time we have baptisms in Church, there is somebody in that room that is not a follower of Jesus, right? They may think they are. They may be trying to figure out what this is all about. You got to think for somebody who has never followed Jesus and they come to a Church service singing.

07:12 They're somewhat familiar with all singing together, facing the same direction. Maybe not, maybe in a concert, but the act of baptism and Communion, like you mentioned, these two things are very unique that cause people to pause and go, what is this? I don't get it. If you are being baptized yourself, you are proclaiming to the world that I am a father of Jesus. In some of our campuses, we have the opportunity to even share a little bit in our baptisms.

07:41 Sometimes we do that on video so we can share it more broadly. Sometimes a campus pastor will just share a little bit about someone's story. So it's very much an opportunity to say, I am a follower of Jesus. I need him. I need this symbolic cleansing where Jesus forgives me of my sins, not through the water, but it's symbolic of that. I need him. I need forgiveness of my sins.

08:04 And I am moving from depending on my own self, which is ultimately futile, to depending on Christ for that cleansing and for my Salvation that gets represented and oftentimes what's said in the pool. We don't really have a baptism formula. There's typically a time where the pastor is praying with whoever is there. What in general does that represent in the pool? We've talked around it. But specifically, what are we looking at when we see someone being immersed in a pool of water in the middle of the service?

08:36 What are we talking about there? We're talking about somebody making the statement that they are dirty, they are sinful, and they need the cleansing blood of Jesus, and then their baptism going under the water is symbolic of them dying with Christ. Roman Six talks about that really? Well, I think. And then being raised up out of the water is a symbol of being raised to new life in Christ.

09:03	And so it's just this compact symbol of death, cleansing, resurrection and the gospel all in this powerful little symbol that happens. And doing it publicly is important. Would you agree? I would totally agree. I think doing it publicly one, you can't proclaim something to somebody who's not there. So we like Grace to do these as part of our services because you have the most people around to bear witness to it.
09:34	And so it would have the most spiritual impact for those in the room and also invites the most people to identify with the person being baptized and commit to being a part of their spiritual growth and connect that to worship because we'll talk about we're going to worship around the pool or why we watch baptisms. But how do people understand why is that a Worshipful event? Well, worship, there are so many aspects to it. And typically when you say worship, people think singing. Right.
10:03	And I think the Bible is pretty clear that really what worship is is a lifestyle that proclaims who God is, that declares that he is God and that I am not, that praises him for all who he is and puts ourselves in a posture of humility and need of God. And so baptism, you can do that in song, right. We sing these words that remind us of those things, and sometimes we're just singing to God.
10:33	Sometimes we're singing to remind ourselves of what we need. But baptism is another very visible form of worship where you're saying all those things. And I think about how in your paradigm of for myself and for others, when I've seen someone be baptized, I'm being reminded if I'm a follower of Jesus who's been baptized on my own baptism and that public declaration, and then I'm also just joining them in celebration for just the Grace of God at work in the world.
11:05	And here's another evidence. Here's another person that has encountered that Grace of God. This has been great, Chris. So one of the questions I have is why water and why immersion so help us understand that as a Church, why do we think in that way? So water has always been part of ritual cleaning, even in Jewish history, predating the Christian Church a symbol of becoming clean and even just physically becoming clean before entering into the temple.
11:32	And so immersion is the typical way that you are physically cleansed. And so we think it's just practical. And so that's the way we do it. It's also what we talked about a few minutes ago, going beneath the water, representing dying with Christ and coming up out of the water, being raised with him. You don't get that symbolism with other forms of baptism. So that is why we do it that way.
11:58	Second, Corinthians comes to mind, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation, basically everything, every part of you is being changed. And I think that is symbolic when every part of you is getting wet. Now, we're not saying that this is the only way. Obviously, there are other traditions that practice baptism differently. But part of what we want to do on this podcast is just help understand what we do as

a Church. And so we've chosen immersion. We've also chosen our worship services.

12:25 And so then you have people basically taking a public bath during a very can be a very crowded Sunday morning. That's an odd experience, Chris. Yeah. I would say for most people, there's a bit of embarrassment that comes with it definitely humility involved in that. If you go back to the first thing, it's an act of obedience. So you got to kind of get past that either way.

12:52 But the idea of denying yourself what you think and feel would be best for you, which would be to not be embarrassed in front of a bunch of people in a pool and saying what Jesus says is more important. Is it fair to say it's a test? Yeah. So denying yourself the comfort that you would naturally gravitate to is not not getting in that pool is an act of humility.

13:19 It's in some ways a form of test where you're showing to yourself and to Jesus that it's not just this nice idea in my head, but I am actually there are going to be actions that follow my words. I think it is one of those times where that public proclamation to a local Church body gives us the confidence to then go out into the world and to give that same kind of witness.

13:47 Except now with our voices, with our lives and with our voices. Yes. And if you think about it, when you're baptized in the Church, you are surrounded by people who all agree with you. Right. And so in some ways, it should be the least threatening version of you identifying with Christ. Now, obviously, different people have different fears, and some of that is being in front of a lot of people. Right. However, what you said is true.

14:16 The act of saying I'm going to identify with Christ over myself in this moment and beginning to train yourself to do that goes a long way because most things in life, most fears in life, the way you work through them is to meet them head on. That's right. So embarrassment bad. But humility is really good. Absolutely. Because that same kind of humility is what you need to have if you're going to have a public witness to Christ, to the world.

14:45 What about the notion of biblical community and being baptized into a local body, say, and some of the accountability that comes with that? How should one think about and process that aspect of baptism? The implication of baptism, definitely. Well, I think you have to look at a few different things and put them together because they make sense to go together. God established the Church, and the Church is his body. It's the vehicle through which he carries out his mission here on Earth.

15:16 And so to be baptized as a follower of Jesus, separate from the Church, really just doesn't make any sense. The baptism is a proclamation that you were part of that Church following Jesus. And so the community is a piece of that. All throughout Scripture, you see the need for community, the need for forms of governing authority, a connection from you as a member of the Church to those who are responsible before God, to you.

15:48 And so in our Church, we have community group leaders, we have pastors, we have ministers, and ultimately everybody in our Church, especially if you remember here, you are connected to someone who feels responsible for your growth. So when you're baptized at Grace, you're being baptized into your community.

16:12 When I say into your community, I mean, like we talked about earlier, inviting the accountability, inviting the authority within the Church, that somebody is accountable for you before God and you are submitting to that. Yeah. So we talked about the why a little bit. We've talked about the why. Let's talk about the how. So help us understand what does it look like when a responsible pastor or someone who is caring for someone that wants to get baptized in the Church, how does that process come about?

16:43 What does that look like? Well, we're really trying to balance two things. One, the call to be baptized. So if somebody is a follower of Jesus and they realize, I need to be baptized, we want to make that happen. But at the same time, we have a responsibility for that person following him. Do they know what it means to be a follower of Jesus? Obviously, it would be a mistake to be baptized if you are not a follower of Jesus because you're not able to identify with Christ if you're not following him.

17:14 And it would be confusing to somebody if nobody ever stepped into that and helped them understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus. And then they have this eboneser that we talked about where they're like, well, no, I was baptized. So surely I'm a follower of Jesus. We want to make sure to the best of our ability that people understand what it actually means to be a follower of Jesus. We have this process, Chris, where pastors, we have interviews and we're making sure people are clear on the gospel and clear on their story.

17:46 And I would say that that process is actually part of their discipleship. Would you agree? Oh, definitely. There's no better time to talk with somebody about their story and understand that they're a father of Jesus or if they have some confusion about that. Needless to say, we have a lot of people come into the Church with different backgrounds. They might have been in Church their whole life. They might have been coming from a background where they've never been in Church ever.

18:13 And so going all the way back to Jesus time, there's confusion over what it means to be a follower of him. We're actually talking about that some in acts this coming week. But there's no better time while somebody saying, I need to identify as a follower of Jesus and to publicly be baptized, to stop right there and understand, make sure that they are as clear as possible on what it means to be a father of Jesus. Now, obviously, there are times when somebody is not as eloquent in their ability to articulate the gospel in a moment when you're sitting down and having a conversation with them.

18:47 But if they were to write it down by themselves or if they were to be talking to their spouse or something. So there are different abilities to communicate. And we always want to do our best not to keep

somebody from being baptized who needs to be it's the positive version of that. We want to take advantage of that opportunity to understand their story and make sure that they're as clear as possible before they make that commitment. What I love is it just connects the dots between something that we like to privatize, which is our faith.

19:17 But seeing a big difference between personal and private, and taking a personal faith and making it public, putting it in the community, making it an opportunity to worship, make it an opportunity to share, to have accountability, to be known. And I just think it gives confidence as it leads to greater devotion to God and others. Chris, someone has questions.

19:44 How do we go about Besides this podcast, helping them understand some of these aspects of baptism? How do they think about as a parent talking to their kids about baptism? What are some of the things we're trying to do as a Church to equip our Church body? Well, I'm a little old school when it comes to that question, and I think there's no better way than to have a conversation with somebody.

20:09 We have some resources online related to baptism, and we're actually in the process of creating some new resources just to help people understand some of what we're talking about today, some of the what and the why. But honestly, because baptism is both personal and public, there has to be a personal component to taking that step. And so I'd recommend talking to whatever leader is closest to you.

20:35 So again, if you're a student, talk to your student group leader or the student Ministry leader, your campus, or if you're in a community group, you can talk to your community group leader or your community group pastor. But a conversation is going to be the best way to get questions answered, to find out more. And then any resources we have online really would just be supplemental to that to help have something to refer back to. That's great. Yeah. So this has been really good. Is there anything you'd want to add or leave with us as we close?

21:07 Mostly, if you're hearing this podcast and know that you have not been baptized as a follower of Jesus, I just want to make a shameless plug to say you need to be. And this is just a matter of what we talked about, a matter of following Jesus, obeying him, creating a moment in time that you can look back to where you declared that you were following him. And for the opportunity you have to proclaim the gospel to others. You get to do your part in bringing others to Jesus through that.

21:37 And so I would encourage you, even if you have questions or you're embarrassed or whatever it may be, don't let that Henry you take the step to talk to somebody because this is something you need to do. If you're a father of Jesus and have not, that's good. Well, thanks for doing that. Thanks, Chris. Yeah. Well, as we wrap up today's conversation, we want to thank you for joining us. Be sure to subscribe to your favorite podcasting channel so you can be updated

with each new episode. If you know someone who would benefit from hearing this, please consider sharing it with them.

22:07 And if you have questions or want access to any additional resources to help you dive deeper into this subject, be sure to check out our podcast page at gracechurchesc. Orgwydisposhift. If we can help you answer any questions about this episode or want us to discuss something in a future episode, email us at ydispolship@gracechurchsc.org hey, thanks for joining us today, and we looked forward to joining you on the next episode.