

# Application

As you press into what it means to BE the body of Christ in the local church, spend some time meditating on these thoughts and questions.

What actually happens in your life at the moment you believe the gospel?

To who or what are you most clearly identified?

How would a close friend answer this question about you?

As a student, how do you claim allegiance to Christ at school?

As a young adult or young married, how do you profess your identification with Christ and His church?

As a grandparent, how are you passing on a legacy of close identification with Jesus?

## Some Practical Steps:

Consider your place in the local church.

Have you become an official member of Faith? Membership in a local church is all about identifying with a group of people and joining them in mission. **Our Connection Seminar for new members begins next week.**

Where are you using your gifts in the church? Being a part of the body of Christ means that we serve each other and the community.

Have you been baptized? No matter if you are 8 or 80, the choice to publicly identify with Christ and His body is a beautiful and meaningful choice. We encourage you to do it. **Next baptism: April 10.**

We are entering the last week of our 21-day fast. There is still time to participate with thousands of believers in our area praying for *1) spiritual awakening in your own soul* and *2) spiritual awakening in our city*. You won't be sorry that you did. We end our fast with a community-wide prayer and worship service at **HopePointe Church, Jan 30 at 6:00 PM.**

**Church(ology)**  
a biblical study of God's design for the body of Christ

**Church(ology)**

January 23, 2011

# Why Baptism?

Acts 8:25-40 (plus)

## For Further Study

Baptism is among the most diversely held and hotly debated issues in the Christian church. This is highly unfortunate, for God has designed this beautiful rite as a UNIFYING celebration for the body of Christ. In the infant church of the first century, it was inconceivable for a believing Christian to NOT be baptized. It was natural and important. This helps us understand many of the texts regarding both the mode and meaning of baptism.

In addition to the accounts of Jesus identifying with sinners and His role as Messiah in his own baptism (**Matthew 3:13-17**; parallels), it seems clear, but is debated in the language of the text, that Jesus himself baptized people. **John 3:22, 26**, but **4:1-2** may give us caution in at least one instance.

**NOTE WELL:** A Biblical discussion of baptism must involve many texts. It is a aspect of systematic theology, which is Scripture viewed as a whole. As such we will use the narrative of **Acts 8** as our jumping off point into other texts: **Romans 6:1-9**; **Galatians 3:23-27**; **Ephesians 4:4-6**; **Colossians 2:9-12**—ALL of which contain an ancillary mention of baptism within a larger purpose and context. These texts will help us with baptismal images, meaning and significance. See also **Matt 28:19ff**; **1 Cor 1:10ff**.

**Acts 8:** Although not exhaustive, the familiar story of Philip and the Ethiopian official highlights several very important features of baptism for us:

- Christ and the Gospel are at the center of baptism (**v.30, 34-35**).
- Belief in Christ unto salvation PRECEDES baptism (**v.35-37**; **Acts etc**).
- Baptism is a joyous identification with Christ and His body (**v.39**).

**8:36**—This statement of the Ethiopian in context assumes a joyous belief in the gospel explained to him. He is at this point a believer; declared righteous of all sin (**Romans 5**), regenerated (**Titus 3:5**) and baptized by the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 12:12ff**). His desire for water baptism is properly next.

**8:37-38**—If you have a Bible translation other than NAS, NLT or New King James, you will notice that you do not have **Acts 8:37**. This is because several very old manuscripts do not contain this verse, while several younger ones do. Some think that the verse was added after the original for sake of explanation and clarity. Fortunately, it is a non-issue, because a proper understanding of the story, context and relevance to baptism is clear in the immediate context and throughout the rest of Acts, with or without **8:37**.

**NOTE:** There are several passages that seem to link baptism with forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**; **22:16**; **1 Peter 3:21**). Each of these, properly understood in their context and audience, proclaim the same message as the scores of other texts that proclaim salvation and forgiveness of sins as by faith alone, many of them with no reference to baptism whatever. Baptism simply does not save or forgive sins. Although important, baptism is not a requirement for salvation. It is primarily ecclesiological and Christological.