

Message by Matt Brown and Neal Christopher

## Spiritual Community: the Beginning of the Christian life

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38 NIV*

**DISCUSSION:** What is your understanding of how Matt defined repentance? Do you believe you have truly repented of your sins? What is some of the evidence of that change in your life?

**DISCUSSION:** How did you respond to Matt's challenge to examine ourselves to see if we are really believers?

**DISCUSSION:** When you sin are you more concerned about what God thinks, what others might say, or your own guilt because you know you shouldn't do it?

**DISCUSSION:** Do you feel like you are more focused on managing your sin or has God changed you in such a way that you now have a heart that is more responsive to Him?

### 1. Repentance is a real spiritual decision that you are...

#### a. Sick of your life without God in it

*From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." Matthew 4:17 NLT*

*Now it's time to change your ways! Turn to face God so he can wipe away your sins, pour out showers of blessing to refresh you... Acts 3:19 Message*

#### b. Repulsed by your sin and ready to leave it

*Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord... Acts 8:22 NLT*

*The stupid ridicule right and wrong... but the godly acknowledge it and seek reconciliation. Proverbs 14:9 Message; NLT*

*Wash me clean from my guilt... it haunts me day and night... I have done what is evil in your sight... For I was born a sinner... Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again... Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Psalm 51:2-10 NLT*

#### c. Ready to change your mind and lifestyle to follow Jesus Christ

*... Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" Mark 1:14-15 NLT*

### 2. Baptism is a real spiritual decision that...

a. Separates the dabblers from the devoted

*But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12 NIV*

*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Mark 16:16 NIV*

**DISCUSSION:** Have you been baptized? When? What were the circumstances? Do you feel like you are a dabbler or totally devoted?

b. Initiates us into a spiritual community

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:27-28 ESV*

*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:4-6 ESV*

c. Reminds us that we are washed clean

*...But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NLT*

*And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. Acts 22:16 ESV*

**DISCUSSION:** What is stopping you from being baptized this Friday if you haven't already taken that step?

**ACTION STEP:** Bring your small group down to the baptism to participate if they want to be baptized or if you want to support others that have made this important decision.