

"NEVER TOO LATE" ACTS 16:25-34

This Week's Core Competency

Identity in Christ – I believe I am significant because I am a child of God. John 1:12, *Yet to all who receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

In the Great Commission Jesus tells his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded to you" (Mt 28:19-20; emphasis mine). Baptism is not only 'part and parcel' of disciple making, it is basic to what it means to *be* a disciple. These truths were perhaps most evident and exercised by believers during the great advance of the gospel in the first century.

In Acts 2, and in stark contrast to his timid denials during Jesus' arrest, Peter boldly guides a contentious Jewish crowd through the Hebrew Scriptures to understand that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (v. 36). Verse 41 reads, "those who accepted his message [i.e. believed Jesus was Lord and Christ] were baptized." Baptism immediately follows salvation.

In Acts 8, Philip, a respected leader from the church of Jerusalem, flees to Samaria after the

Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?

– Acts 8:36

stoning of Stephen. There he proclaims the gospel of Christ. Verse 12 reads, "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." Baptism immediately follows salvation.

Shortly thereafter, God summons Philip to journey down the road leading to Gaza from Jerusalem. The Spirit leads him to a certain chariot to speak to a pilgrimaging Ethiopian. Verse 35 reads, "Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news of about Jesus." The man believes. A moment later he sees water and says, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized" (v. 36)? And as is evidenced in verse 38, baptism immediately follows salvation.

In Acts 10, a "devout and God-fearing" Gentile named Cornelius receives an angelic vision. He is to bring the apostle Peter to tell his family "everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." Before Peter even finishes, "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (v. 44) and they believe. Cornelius and his family are the first Gentile converts on record. And in verse 48 we see once again, baptism immediately follows salvation.

Lastly, in Acts 16, prior to the unfolding events in today's passage, Paul and Silas speak to a woman named Lydia in the city of Philippi. "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" (v. 14). Her family comes to saving faith as well. Directly after, "she and the members of her household were baptized" (v. 15). It is true here, as before . . . baptism immediately follows salvation.

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So . . . what is your story? Does your 'faith walk' testimony reflect this pattern? I know for many of us, perhaps most of us, including me, it does not. Most of us who have been baptized did so some time after—perhaps many years after—the moment we were saved. And that's okay. But by the same token, let's also agree this all-too-often contemporary 'pattern' (i.e. belief now, baptism later) is certainly not 'biblical'—in the strictest sense of the word. God's design is for water baptism to immediately follow salvation. Why? Because at the moment of our salvation, our identity changed. Our heavenly Father now looks at us through the lens of his Son. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus our Lord (2Co 5:17)! Baptism is intended to celebrate this new identity, your union with Christ (Ro 6:3-4) and your union with fellow believers (1Co 12:13; Gal 3:26-28).

Obedience is always honored by our Father in heaven. The past is in the past. And what matters now is what you *do* with what you *know*. Let me encourage you to "Go and be baptized" at the earliest possible moment. After all, it is *never* too late . . . to do the right thing.

If you have never placed your trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sinful offenses against God, there is simply no better time than the present. Repent . . . believe . . . for "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord *will be saved*" (Ro 10:13; emphasis mine). If 'today' is your day of salvation let me encourage you as well, "Go," young disciple of Jesus, "Go and be baptized!"

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Acts 16:25-34

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized." 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "about midnight" indicating *time* in v. 25.
- * Box the main characters in this passage.
- * Circle "suddenly" indicating *transition* in v. 26.
- * Circle "at once" indicating *time* in v. 26.
- * Underline each occurrence of "all," "everyone," etc.
- * Double underline the question in v. 30.
- * Highlight the answer in v. 31.
- * Circle "immediately" indicating *time* in v. 33.
- * Highlight "he was...household" in v. 34
- * Underline "filled with joy" in v. 34.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read Acts 16:16-24. Summarize what happened leading up to the events in today's passage.
2. Having just been subjected to injustice, harsh torture and imprisonment (vv. 22-24), Paul and Silas are found praying and singing to God (v. 25). What do you make of their response?
3. What happens next? What details lead us to believe this natural phenomenon to be *supernatural*?
4. How did the jailer respond? Why do you think he would be willing to take such a drastic measure?
5. After Paul encouraged otherwise, what did the jailer do and say?
6. Restate Paul and Silas' response to the jailer's question in your own words.
7. In what ways did the jailer treat Paul and Silas with brotherly love following his conversion?
8. The baptisms took place "immediately" (See also: front page essay). What do these examples suggest about the 'timeliness' of baptism subsequent to one's salvation?
9. What evidence is present by the jailer that testifies to the authenticity of his conversion?
10. **Discussion:** What are some reasons believers give for putting off their baptism? What words of encouragement would you offer to a fellow believer who has yet to be baptized?

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The book of Acts tells the story of how the gospel of Jesus spread from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke, the author, guides the reader through six 'movements'—each concluding with a brief summary statement that affirms the growth of Christ's church (See: 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20). Verse 6 in chapter 16 marks the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey. His travels take him to Philippi—"A Roman colony and the leading city of the district of Macedonia" (v. 12). While there, Paul casts an evil spirit out of a "female slave" who could predict the future (vv. 16-18). Enraged by the financial loss they would soon incur, her owners "seize" and "drag" Paul and Silas before like-minded Roman authorities, charging: "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice" (vv. 20b-21). The two evangelists are quickly sentenced. Both men are "stripped" of their outer clothes, "severely flogged" and "thrown into prison" (vv. 22b-23a). In the officials' haste to execute judgment, the legal rights afforded Paul and Silas, as Roman citizens, are abrogated (cf. 1Th 2:2). Otherwise, he and Silas could have received a formal, legal trial. Then, regardless of the outcome, any form of physical torture would have been precluded (cf. 22:25). The jailer is ordered to "guard them carefully" (v. 23b). In response, he places them in the prison's "inner cell" and "fastened their feet in the stocks" (v. 24), presumably with no insight as to if or when they would be released. But this setting is precisely where our story this morning *begins*.

For someone whose hope and trust is *not* in God, this situation would foster a foreboding sense of fear, dejection and isolation. But for Paul and Silas their circumstances matter not (cf. 1Pe 3:14). God is sovereign. He is in control. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. And, truth be told, suffering is affixed to gospel proclamation (Mk 8:31 w/ Ac 1:3; Ac 9:16; 2Co 1:5; Php 1:29; Col 1:24; 2Ti 1:8, 2:3; 1Pe 2:20-21). "The apostles' response to escalating suffering was increasing joy, fulfilling Jesus' word (Lk 6:22-23). The reason for their joy was the honor of [enduring] dishonor [for Christ]" (Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts*,

222-23). Resultantly, Paul and Silas offer passionate prayers and praises to the living God - with a captive audience to boot (v. 25)! Later the Apostle Peter states, "If you suffer as a Christian do not be ashamed but praise God that you bear that name" (1Pe 4:16). *Oh to be found worthy by God to suffer for Christ's sake* (cf. Ac 5:41)!

Without notice, a violent earthquake shakes the prison to its foundations (v. 26a). In the process, all the cell doors fly open and every inmate's chains come loose (v. 26b). The jailer wakes up, sees the aftermath and presumes the prisoners have escaped (v. 27). In out-of-his-mind desperation, the jailer initiates a plan to take his own life. But, Paul's jail cell plea averts a hopeless and tragic end for the man (v. 28). Paul's words sound like a beacon of hope. The man rushes to his cell and falls to his knees (v. 29). Once comforted, the jailer asks of Paul and Silas the most welcomed question a believer could ever receive. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (v. 30). In response, Jesus' ambassadors offer the simplest and most straightforward answer imaginable: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you *will be saved*" (v. 31; italics mine). In a flash Paul and Silas find themselves sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ before the jailer's entire household. All of them come to saving faith (v. 34b) in demonstration of the Spirit's power (cf. 2Co 2:4).

In his first act of brotherly love the jailer escorts them to a nearby body of water and washes their wounds (v. 33a). "Immediately" afterward, he and his whole family are baptized (v. 33b). What a beautiful 'exchange.' The once apathetic jailer compassionately uses water to aid in Paul and Silas' *physical* healing. Then, Paul and Silas use this same water source for the jailer and his family's baptism symbolizing their *spiritual* healing by faith in the person and finished work of Christ Jesus our Lord. They return to the jailer's house to feast on a meal (v. 34a). Why a meal? Because, that's just what we 'church folks' do.

And not to be missed is the joy the jailer experiences as a result of "he and his whole family" (v. 34b) coming into relationship with God by their saving faith in God's Son. Do you know the joy of being reconciled to God by faith through

Christ Jesus' death on the cross for your sins? Do you know the joy that comes through obedience, beginning with baptism, to the commands of our Savior and King? If not, I pray that today you

will. Jesus says, "Now this is *eternal life*: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3).

The Message of the Passage

Maintain prayer and praise to God amidst gospel-induced persecutions as we wait for deliverance and vindication, being confident that many will be brought to saving faith and baptized through our hope-filled testimony.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 25 **prayer/singing** "There was no sleep for the missionaries that night, thanks to their pain and their uncomfortable position. But in the midst of their suffering, they displayed their trust in God and their joy by praying and singing praise to him. Here we have a concrete depiction of the Christian ideal of 'joy amid suffering' (Ro 5:3; Jas 1:2; 1Pe 5:6). The prayers offered may have been simply of praise to God; there is no suggestion that the prisoners prayed for release" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, TNTC).
- v. 26 **violent earthquake** "Earthquakes in this region are common. Fitzmyer (1998; 588) notes that the timing of the event is key in pointing to God's work. In Hellenism [i.e. Greek thought/culture], an earthquake points to a theophany [i.e. an appearance of God]" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 540).
- v. 27 **jailer** "The jailer is rapidly sketched. His stern devotion to duty (27) is apparent; so, too, are his rapid recognition of Paul's spiritual leadership (30), his clear-cut decision (33), his kindly practical response (33), his evident leadership in his own household (34)" (E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles*, TNTC, 127).
- v. 27 **kill himself** "Jailers and guards were personally responsible for their prisoners and in some instances were executed for allowing them to escape (cf. 12:19)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 355).
- v. 30 **What/saved** "The question ['What must I do to be saved?'] can hardly refer to being *saved* from punishment by his superiors over what had happened in the prison, since the prisoners were all safe; we do not have a case of reinterpretation on a spiritual level (compare the way in which 'water' is understood both on a literal and on a spiritual level in Jn 4:10-15, or the way in which 'save' can be used both of physical and of spiritual healing in the Gospels, Lk 7:50; 8:48). Rather the jailer is forced by the supernatural confirmation of the message to realize that he must come to terms with the God proclaimed by Paul and Silas" (Marshall, 273).
- v. 31 **believe/Lord** "Paul explains that faith in the Lord Jesus will save the jailer and his household. This brief confession expresses the core of what saving response is—to trust in Jesus' salvation authority at work. 'Lord' is the title chosen here to summarize that authority (see Ac 2:36). The use of this title reflects tradition. (Ro 10:9; Php 2:11; Ac 5:14; 9:42; 11:17). Clearly, Luke is summarizing here. The jailer would have the meaning of such a confession explained to him (v. 32 says as much). The theme of Jesus' authority is what was highlighted in a first-century Gentile context in the church's preaching (Ac 10:42; 17:30-31). At a literary level in the unity, faith in Jesus is the answer to the way of salvation (16:17). It is the theological point as well, being the core of the kerygma [i.e. gospel proclamation]" (Bock, 542).
- v. 33 **baptized/immediately** "His household is baptized immediately, as was the case in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 16 (Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, and Lydia, respectively). As with the Ethiopian eunuch and with Cornelius's family (8:38; 10:48), baptism follows immediately upon faith to symbolize the washing that is associated with their response of faith. The jailer may have washed the prisoners' wounds, but he himself received a better washing ["by the Holy Spirit" - Tit 3:4-7]" (Bock, 542).
- v. 34 **joy** (ESV, NKJV "rejoiced;" NET Bible, NASB "rejoiced greatly") Joy, of "the fruit of the Spirit" (cf. Gal 5:22), is given to believers at their salvation by the Holy Spirit/His indwelling in them. Joy, and the rest, becomes more operative in the life of a believer through their obedient responses to God's word and submission to the Spirit's leading in their life. The jailer was overjoyed that salvation had come to him and his family. Earlier (v 25), we see Paul and Silas full of joy, knowing that the God of their salvation was exponentially, indeed infinitely, greater than their seemingly insurmountable circumstances. "For I have learned to be content in any circumstance" (Php 4:11b, NET Bible; emphasis mine).
- v. 34 **whole family** "The involvement of the household is stressed, as it is noted three [previous] times in the unit (vv. 31, 32, 33). Household responses appear also in 11:14 and 16:15 with Cornelius and Lydia" (Bock, 542). "Here Luke made explicit what was implicit in the Lydia story: the whole household heard the gospel proclaimed. There was no 'proxy' faith" (Polhill, 356).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

As we approach baptism Sunday next week, your child may have questions about what is going on? Rather than just saying, "It's a church pool party," here are some ideas from Jana Magruder. She is the Director of Kids Publishing at LifeWay. Talk to your kids about the 5 "W's" and an "H". "Who can be baptized? Anyone who has decided to make Jesus the Lord of their life and are ready to make a profession of faith. What is baptism? The external display of an internal heart-change. It is not a means of salvation, but a response. When can someone be baptized? When they have made preparations with their pastor and church. Where can someone be baptized? Sometimes people are baptized inside in a baptistery, while others may be baptized in other bodies of water like a river, lake or pool. Anywhere they can be completely submerged and brought up again. Why should someone be baptized? It is an act of obedience to God and a way to show others that Jesus has changed their life. How do you get baptized? A pastor, and sometimes family member help submerge you under water and bring you up again (you get to hold your nose!) This shows how we have been buried and resurrected with Christ." (<http://www.lifeway.com/kidsministry/2014/07/01/swimming-at-church-kids-and-baptism/>) What a privilege it is to get to have these life-changing conversations with our kids. I'm praying yours takes a step towards baptism today!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Acts 16:25-34

1. What event happened while Paul and Silas were in jail?
2. Did they try to escape when their chains fell off?
3. What happened to the jailer's family?

What Do You Think

1. How do you think the jailer felt when he realized all the prisoners were there?
2. Why is his question so important in verse 30?

What R U Going To Do

Schedule an interview with your parents, another adult or your small group leader. Ask them to tell you their salvation story. How old were they when they trusted Christ? What happened? When were they baptized? Think of others!

Core Comp

Identity in Christ - I believe I am special because I am a child of God.

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:13 - *With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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