

City Church Trevor LEAD pastor slide

There are 3 questions I can ask almost any person and guarantee they know the answer.

(Ask a few people in the room...THAT HAVE CHILDREN)

- 1) When were you born?
- 2) Are you married- if so, when did you get married?
- 3) Do you have kids?

A lot of people can tell you not only when they were born- and married- but where, and what the circumstances were-

Couples can recount stories of how they met...how one person was the pursuer and the other was playing hard to get.

Tell story of me and Keva (air brushed license plate) Faked like she was asleep.

I can also tell you the story of when she suddenly broke up with me. When she accidentally told me she loved me...when she wrote a note to her friend about it...then tore the note up and threw it in the trash can in my dorm room...and that I pulled it out, and pieced it back together like a puzzle so I could read what she was saying about me.

I know all of my sons birthdays by heart- and I know their adoption days by heart. And I can give you story after story about what led up to those days.

You know- in all of those moments- we could ask questions like- “when did you know you were going to adopt?” or “When were you sure you would marry her?” or “What was it like when you found out she was pregnant?”...

...but the thing is- I don't celebrate the moment I knew I would marry her...Every year- we celebrate the moment we made a commitment to each other in a public ceremony in May 29th, 1999.

We don't celebrate the day we found out we were pregnant. Or the day we decided we would adopt- We celebrate BIRTHDAYS and Adoption days- we throw celebrations and give gifts. We mark the moment.

On the other hand- when I ask people - “When did you decide to follow Jesus?” or “When did you become a Christian?”

Often- the response to this question is “I've always been a Christian.”

Can you imagine if you asked me when I got married to my wife and I said “We've always been married”

Or if you asked “When were you born?” and I answered “I’ve always been born.” or “I grew up in a house where from a very early age I just knew I was born.”

That doesn’t make any sense because we all know- that those events- that signal NEW LIFE...a new person in the world...a new role as a husband or wife or mother or father...those things are all marked by ceremony and celebration about the time you changed from being NOT BORN- to BORN. From being NOT MARRIED to MARRIED.

And- while I totally agree that for a lot of folks- the exact moment you went from not believing to believing can be cloudy...The fact is- nobody- I mean nobody can just “always be a Christian”.

You can always have been taken to church.

You can always have had a bible.

You can for as long as you remember really have respected God and wanted Jesus as a major part of your life...

...but you cannot possibly have “always been a Xian”.

Because becoming a Xian involves you, an individual person, making a decision. Jesus refers to that moment as being “born again”. In the NT its compared to “adoption”. And it makes you a part of the church- known as “the bride of Christ”.

You cannot inherit it, absorb it by osmosis, or fall accidentally into it. It doesn’t matter how long you have or haven’t been in church, it doesn’t matter how many years you went to a Christian school or spent in Christian homeschooling, it doesn’t matter how much theology you know or don’t know, or how many Bible verses you do or don’t have committed to memory. None of that makes you- or keeps you from being- a Christian.

Doesn’t matter what your parents believed...or if they chose or not chose to baptize you as a baby. That was not your decision.

You must make an active conscious decision to follow Jesus...and the ceremony and celebration we mark that with- is believer’s baptism.

Thats what we’re doing today.

Baptism Sunday Slide

And you can be a part of it

Today- all kinds of people, from all different ages and walks of life will make a decision to follow Jesus and be baptized. There are some of you in this room right now- that you didn’t walk in expecting to get wet today- but you are going to DECIDE to follow Jesus in obedience and faith- and be baptized- right outside on the sidewalk...right

after I finish preaching. You are going to get rid of all your escapes and excuses. And finally say “Yes” to Jesus.

Some of you are thinking “I’m too old”- or “Its too late” or “It will be embarrassing”... and by the end of this message God is going to speak so clearly to you- that you will DECIDE to be baptized.

Somebody is going to go from cynical to believer today.
Somebody is going have THE turning point of their life happen in the next hour.
And It is all going to come down you deciding.
And all of the rest of us are going to go crazy with applause when you come up from the water after making one of the best decisions of your entire life!

October 18, 2026 will forever for you be the answer to the question “When were you born again?” or “When did you tell the world that you’re following Jesus.?”

MOMENT OF SILENCE

I’m gonna show you one of my favorite stories in the book of Acts today. One that shows you when two people who are done making excuses- say YES to Jesus.

We’ll walk through this text together- I’ll point out a few things- then I’ve got two very short and very direct points at the end before I invite you to take a step of faith.

Title Slide- “Look, There’s Water: What Would Keep You from Being Baptized?”- Acts 8:26-40

I’m gonna do a recap here from previous episodes in Acts so you understand what’s going on.

Just before where we pick up in chapter 8- things are going crazy good in these early days of the church after Jesus’ resurrection.

Samaritans had previously been the enemies of the Jews- but now the Holy Spirit had pressed these new Christians- who were all Jewish- to take the good news about Jesus’ death and resurrection- out to the Samaritans.

So this guy named Phillip is in a city in Samaria and he’s preaching and healing people and all these Samaritan men and women are putting their faith in Jesus- and the line to the river to be baptized is all the way down the street. The city is absolutely buzzing. People’s lives are being miraculously transformed.

It is THE PLACE TO BE- and Phillip is right in the middle of it. It’s basically what Knoxville felt like yesterday to all you UT fans. Except- less cigars....probably.

Now lets get to our text today.

Acts 8:26-27a

26 An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: "Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is the desert road.) 27 So he got up and went.

This is like being at Karaoke party in Nashville with all your friends...and you just CRUSHED "Don't Stop Believing!"- and in the middle of all the high-fives- your boss calls and says you have to drive to Bucksnort, TN and park at a gas station and wait for further orders.

Its like being on an undefeated Super Bowl winning team- and on the way back to celebrate in the locker room- you are told you are traded and must immediately report to an Expansion Canadian Football team in Alberta, Canada.

Any of us would breathe a big sigh and immediately the FOMO would start setting in.

Gaza is a little po-dunk out of way village...and even worse- Its a Philistine city. Philistines might have been a worse enemy of the Jews than the Samaritans.

So here is Phillip- in the center of the most exciting movement of God he's ever seen- that admittedly was a hard place to go because he didn't like Samaritans...but he's finally tasting the fruit of his labors...and now- he's got to LITERALLY walk away from it at the high point- to go BACK into enemy territory.

And he's not even told why.

[PAUSE]

But he goes.

There's 2 things to note here.

1- You can see the pattern of the gospel breaking down walls of hostility. First the Samaritans- now- he's headed to the land of the Philistines. The gospel of Jesus doesn't have boundaries on where you live or what ethnicity you are— or how uptown or downtown or midtown or cosmopolitan or country you are. Like I told you last week- if you are a human being- you need JESUS—> He doesn't have a type.

2- Philip is so moved by what Jesus did for him, by the love and forgiveness and hope of eternal life that he received from Jesus- that he is willing to walk away from one of the sweetest moment of his life- because he is sure that there is more to come.

That's what Philip is doing out there.

Let me just ask you— If you know Jesus- if you have received his love and forgiveness and hope of eternal life- does he move you like this? Are you ready to go wherever he calls you to go and do whatever he calls you to do- even if it doesn't fit your plan for your life?

Remember- to follow Jesus isn't just to receive forgiveness- you also receive a mission.

You aren't just saved FROM something- you are saved TO something.

Put your "YES" on the table- and let Jesus put it on the map.- Samaria, Gaza, Bucksport, Knoxville (If you are looking for a little CLARITY)- and like I've been sensing for a while now- Southern Italy.

But seriously- everyone Jesus saves- he also sends. Are you listening?

Ok- now- lets see why Philip gets this assignment.

Acts 8:27a

There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem.

This is incredible! God sends Philip away from the center of the action out to the Bucksport gas station for ONE GUY. ONE DUDE.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells a story a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep in the sheep pen to go after and rescue one sheep that strayed away. - Yeah- this is very on brand for Jesus. The 99 are in Samaria- this Ethiopian is "the one".

What love! Deep down each of us wants to be seen and cared for. Known and loved. God sees this Ethiopian man- and he loves him...and he sends Philip with that very message.

Let me show you-

In that day- Ethiopia was basically everything in Africa south of the Nile river in Egypt. So this is a HUGE country. This guy is the Secretary of Finance for the whole country. So this is a man of influence and importance.

He's also a Eunuch. He's been castrated. So- that means he...ummmm...uhhhh...he used to play hockey, but they ummm... took his equipment away...cuz they...ummm.... didn't want him to accidentally hit queen Candace with a puck.

Jeremy Young, our executive pastor, will be here later to answer any questions you got about Eunuchs.

Now- here's where it gets VERY interesting. It says that he is on his way to Jerusalem to worship.

If you are reading the Bible with curiosity- right here the text is prompting you to ask a very curious question. WHY?

They had LOTS of religions in Ethiopia- they worshipped the sun, they worshipped different animals: they had no shortage of things to worship in Ethiopia.

And despite having access to the very best of the best of the best that life has to offer- the food, the money, the access to power— he was STILL searching- for something better than the Sun... something that an animal could never give him...a power greater than the Queen of the South could offer him. He was so desperate he was willing to travel hundreds of miles to find it.

Everything this man thought would fulfill him and give him purpose- was not enough. And just like Philip was willing to leave his hotspot to go to Bucksnot- this Ethiopian eunuch- was willing to risk it all- (he would have had to be away from months- which means his job could be in jeopardy)- and he is willing to walk away from it all with the HOPE- that whatever it is about this God of the Jews that he's heard rumors of- maybe, just maybe- he'll find something worth giving his life to.

Phillip- is going out to the woods in a totally different spot- he's going into the wilderness because he is so confident of what he's got. He is going out because he is so convinced he's found the one real God...the Ethiopian heads out because he's convinced he hasn't found him yet.

Isn't it so beautiful- how God intentionally matches folks like this up. Because Jesus is never meant to be kept to yourself. What he gives you- he gives you to give to others.

A good question to ask yourself if you know Jesus is- Who is he calling me share him with? Who is searching in my life?

Acts 8:28-31

and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go and join that chariot." 30 When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me? " So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Think about how awkward this could be.

First- this is not a horse drawn carriage. According to Ethiopian royal travel- this is likely a large platform carried by 8 guys. FOR 1200 miles. I mean its got to be going slow enough that Phillip can just run up next to it. It doesn't show up here in the English- but in the Greek- it says that Phillip jogged alongside the Chariot and said "PULLOVER" and the Ethiopian Eunuch said, "NO...Its a Cardigan."

But seriously, think about the weirdness of this whole scene. The Holy Spirit says "Go join that Chariot" and Phillip is like...ummm OKAY...then he jogs up beside it and what...says "Watcha reading there, sport?"

And then the Ethiopian invites him to come up and ride with him. Man- i bet those 8 guys carrying the carriage were like “SERIOUSLY!?!?”

Anyway- notice- the Holy Spirit speaks to Philip. Guides him. But he’s got to be listening and willing. And because he is- Phillip is ushered into a beautiful moment- Because he knows EXACTLY what the prophet Isaiah is about.

Listen- here’s what I really want you to see.

In the middle of the hustle and bustle of the big crowds and people being changed in Samaria...God is deeply and intentionally concerned with one Ethiopian outsider. He’s already been at work- planting questions in his heart, drawing him and getting the Bible to him.. at least in part. He knows that he is missing something— and God is working on Phillips end too. Calling him. Sending him- to bring what’s missing.

This is what’s happening with some of you today. God has been stirring in you. Bringing a dissatisfaction with your life- with what has held your attention for so long- and bringing you in here today on a divine appointment to hear the answer to that deep, stirring question. What is my life really about?

You’ve been thinking about death. Thinking about meaning. Thinking about how if you just keep living like your living- you don’t really see why your life matters in the long run.

You’re sitting here today because someone invited you. Because you randomly decided- I’m going to church today. But there is more behind that randomness. There is a God that sees you, knows you, loves you- and wants to connect you with the message from the Bible you’re hearing today.

This Eunuch went to Jerusalem- hoping to find God, but he is returning to his home, reading this Scroll of Isaiah he got there- and he is leaving more confused than when he started.

Acts 8:32-33a

Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,

and as a lamb is silent before its shearer,

so he does not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.

This is a quote from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Its famously called the prophesy of the Suffering Servant. It was written about Jesus about 800 years before Jesus was born.

Isaiah says that the Messiah- or the anointed one- the one who is promised to save humanity from their sins- would be like a lamb led to be killed. He would be convicted for crimes he didn’t commit...but instead of crying and thrashing about and protesting demanding his rights- he would go silently to his death.

This all really happened to Jesus. In the NT gospel of John- when Jesus stands before Pontious Pilate- he was accused of blasphemy- and even though he had only ever told the truth- he was silent.

Why? Why didn't Jesus defend himself?

Because he was conceding guilt. But not his own guilt...he was the only person in the history of the world to live a perfect life. He was silent because he was consenting to my guilt. Isaiah goes on to write that he was wounded for MY transgressions...Punished for my sin.

8:34

34 The eunuch said to Philip, "I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about — himself or someone else?"

- There's one reason why this Ethiopian would risk everything that made him who he was to figure out the God that was being worshipped in Jerusalem.
- None of his money, none of his power, none of any of the myriad of gods that he could have worshipped ...and probably did at one time...had ever given back to him anything that was worth what he lost when he became a Eunuch. The hope of a family.
- This Ethiopian is searching for meaning. He's searching for a cause outside of himself that's worth giving his life up for.
- He's looking to serve someone greater than Queen Candace.
- ...and frankly...when he left Jerusalem...he probably left pretty disappointed.
- There's really no delicate way to do this...but I need to share this verse with you so you understand why that is.
- This is from the book of Deuteronomy in the Jewish Torah. Its in a section that talks about who is excluded from worshipping in the temple.
- **Deut 23:1**
- **No man whose testicles have been crushed or whose [male organ] has been cut off may enter the Lord's assembly.**
- Ok, don't everybody rush out at once to have this one screen printed on a t-shirt.
- I know- this is your next tattoo..But seriously..
- Going into the temple...being close to God...meant showing yourself to be clean. To be without blemish...at least ceremonially.
- There was no way to ceremonially be cleansed from this kind of physical altering of the body. Its not like he could just wash his hands.
- Actually, there was a sign out in front of the outer court of the Temple that said, "**No lame, no blind, and no eunuchs can enter here**"

- **...now can you see why he would be pretty disheartened on his way back?**
- 1200 miles...just to get to the Temple and find a religion with a God who seemingly didn't want him.
- Here's a man who is really trying.
- He wants to worship God...but the law says...keep your distance.
- Right now...do you resonate with this guy?
- Maybe you haven't climbed the career ladder like he has...but you've been at the end of your rope. And you've looked to God...to Xianity...to Jesus...to the church...to find help...and all they've seemed to say to you is... "You're too messed up to be a Xian. You can't worship this God...you've made an irreversible mistake... committed an unforgivable sin."
- **You've searched for this God outside of yourself, but you walk away feeling like you are the only one who cares about you.**
- Listen, if that's you. I want you to know that this is not how the story ends. I'll tell you if you are going to trust God, if you are going to follow Jesus...there is no doubt you will be confronted with unsettling truth. The Law will always show you that you don't deserve to be close to God. It tells me the same thing.
- But...Thankfully...God's last word about this Ethiopian is not "UNCLEAN". And that's not his last word to you either.

8:35

Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture.

Phillip answers his question. This, my friend, is about Jesus. He is the lamb led to slaughter. He is the whole point.

2 ways to spell religion.

DO- religion is a bunch of stuff to do, then God will accept me if I get some arbitrary percentage of it right.

But this is not the good news about Jesus- which is called the Gospel. IT literally translates to Good News.

The gospel is not spelled DO...its D-O-N-E- DONE!

I'm not accepted by God because of what I can do to prove myself to him...but because of what he has DONE for me.

The message of the gospel is simple. Jesus did all the work. He lived the life we were created to live...but failed. And he died the death our sin against God deserves on a cross.

He traded places with us. A quick summation of the gospel is "Jesus in my place".

This is what Philip explained to the Ethiopian. And its why so many of us here at City Church gather every week. Its not so we can be better people...or because studies show that attending a worship gathering weekly makes you a happier and more fulfilled person...

...even though that is true.

We gather in here because we are so stunned...and overwhelmed by the Grace of God...that though we deserve death- in Jesus Christ- he has gifted us eternal life.

Imagine being convicted of a crime. And you are set to be executed at midnight. And at 11:59- you are escorted out of the prison...to a limousine. You are allowed to take a shower and clean up- you are given an extensive high quality wardrobe...and you are driven to a mansion overlooking a hill where all your family is waiting with a party- and you find out its all yours and you're not going back to prison.

When you ask- "Wait- who's house is this?" Someone says, "You were released and given all of this- because the man who owns all of this- saw you helpless- and loved you so much that he is sitting in that electric chair in your place right now?"

For the rest of your life- you would sing the praises of that man wouldn't you?

Now- imagine a week later- you hear rumors- that the man is actually still alive. Then you bump into him- and he asks you- "Can I come live with you in that mansion?" Tell me- are you going to just give him the spare bedroom- or the master bedroom?

Will you put him outside in the guest house? or give him the keys and serve him?

What if he asked you, "Will you get into and out of water real quick to show the world what I did for you?"

- The passage that is quoted in these verses is from Isaiah 53. We don't know for sure, but it seems pretty likely that the Ethiopian would have also seen these verses 3 chapters over in Isaiah 56

- **Isaiah 56:3-5**

- **No foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord**
 - **should say,**
 - **"The Lord will exclude me from his people,"**
 - **and the eunuch should not say,**
 - **"Look, I am a dried-up tree."**
 - **4 For the Lord says this:**
 - **"For the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,**
 - **and choose what pleases me,**
 - **and hold firmly to my covenant,**
 - **5 I will give them, in my house and within my walls,**
 - **a memorial and a name**
 - **better than sons and daughters.**
 - **I will give each of them an everlasting name**
 - **that will never be cut off.**
- Can you imagine when he reads this verse what he thinks?
 - Its everything he's wanted. A name better than a family!
 - A name that is absolutely bigger than a family legacy.
 - He's not a dried up tree. He's not a worthless person.
 - Rather...all of the angst...all of the pain of wondering whether or not his life is wasted is answered in this promise to the eunuchs.
 - YOU WILL BE A PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD!
 - You will be included!

The only question left for the Eunuch- is WILL YOU MAKE A DECISION?
Watch this!

Acts 8:36-39

36 As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's water. What would keep me from being baptized? " **38 So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing.**

Here are my 2 points- and my invitation to you.

1) The eunuch made a decision.

Salvation is a gift, but you have to receive it! What do you have to do to receive a gift? Think about an Ambulance. You don't have to "do" anything to get in, you just consent to it. That's what believing the Gospel is like. You don't do anything, you just consent. Have you done that? Have you ever said "Yes?" to Jesus?

Or like a chair... Let that chair represent what Christ has done for you...salvation is consenting to it, resting in it... yes, I receive it.

Have you ever done that? I want to give you a chance to do that right now... then make one final point. Bow your heads... (Not a good time to gather your stuff, because we're not quite done.) "I believe, and I receive."

2) He was immediately baptized...and wanted to be!

The Eunuch asked the question, "What keeps me from being baptized?," and evidently Philip said, "Nothing," because the next thing you see is them both down in the water on the side of the road getting baptized.

You're like, "Whoa, whoa... baptism? Aren't we skipping a few steps? Don't we need some ceremony... some classes; some confirmation; walk an aisle, pray a prayer? Don't we need to prove we're sincere by living the Christian life for about 3 years with no missed Sundays at church or a theology exam or something?

Did you know that every baptism in the NT is spontaneous- on the spot- just like with the Ethiopian here. You can track it through the book of Acts- no one waits. Its immediate after putting your faith in Jesus.

I find often that people argue about whether baptism is necessary for salvation. Its not. But you just never have that ever come up in the Scripture. Did you notice- it was the Ethiopian that brought it up? He WANTED to identify with Jesus. He was eager. Some of you have waited years because you just haven't seen it as necessary- good news- its not too late. "Here is water- why shouldn't you be baptized."

Baptism is a symbol that Jesus gave to the church to represent what he has done for us. You go down under the water...like Jesus died and was buried...and you come up out of the water- new, different- Like Jesus when he resurrected.

But just like any symbol- it doesn't have any power without the reality it represents.

EX- Wedding ring.

If I have it on- it shows people I'm married to Keva.
If you have it on- you don't become married to Keva.

You only have a birthday party if you were born. And you only have a baptism if you are born again.

What does it symbolize?

SALVATION & SURRENDER: Baptism declares “Jesus is my Savior and Lord!”

Lordship- He is the Lord of my life. He calls the shots. I’m dying to control. That part of me is buried in baptism. Savior- His death is my death. And his righteousness is now my righteousness. He identified with my sin on the cross by taking it from me. Now I identify with his perfect life...in baptism. I now carry his name!

IDENTIFICATION: Baptism declares “I’m with Jesus and He’s with me”

The Bible calls salvation a gift. It is something you receive- and then you are baptized to declare it.

So in a moment- I’m going to ask you to decide.

And I know you can already feel the excuses rising up. All the ones that Philip had to ignore when he probably wanted to stay where it was comfortable. But he heard the Holy Spirit speak to him through all the noise- just like you are right now.

First- I want you to know that Baptism is not a cellphone contract that you renew every couple of years.

**So maybe you’re trying to figure out right now SHOULD i be baptized.
Let me help you.**

Were you baptized AFTER you truly repented and trusted Jesus for salvation.

The question is did your life show true and actual repentance- or did you just give lip service to it? IF not- then you should be baptized.

Maybe your saying “I don’t think I’m ready”

Let me be clear: When step out today to be baptized- what’s going to happen is that you’re going to chat with a counselor who will help determine if you’re ready. Stepping out doesn’t mean you have all your questions answered ... but it means you’re ready to have the conversation ... and there are people ready to help you make that determination. We aren’t going to push anybody in the water today. But lets at least start a conversation.

But if would you say Jesus is your Lord and Savior and you’ve repented of your sin? Then you’re ready. The Ethiopian eunuch said, “I wanna get saved.” He gets saved. Then he says, “There’s water, let’s get baptized.” Boom. That’s it.

I don’t need baptism to love Jesus and follow him.

Again, baptism isn’t a condition of salvation; but it is evidence of it. I don’t need to

wear a ring to be married. To say you love Jesus but not follow his command of baptism is either to live in unbelief or disobedience.

- Today's the day ... come be baptized.

I was baptized as a kid. // I don't want to shame my parents.

- It's not shaming your parents, it's ratifying their decision of faith. When they baptized you as a kid it was them saying, "I hope this child grows up to follow Christ." Today you're just ratifying what they desired so many years ago!

I don't have a change of clothes- WE GOT YOU. We have shorts and t shirts for you to change into to get wet- then you're right back into the dry clothes you came in today.

I'm nervous...and don't want people looking at me. Or I rode with someone- and I don't know if they'll want to wait.

Trust me- they'll wait. And if they don't- we'll make sure you get a ride home.

And about that nervousness- Everybody look at the person next to you- and say "If you want to go- I'll go with you."