

SERMON SERIES: The Final Chapters
SCRIPTURE: Matthew 3:1-17
SPEAKER: Mike Woodruff
DATE: February 11-12, 2017

Small Group Discussion Guide

for leaders (see below for participants' guide)

Gathering Time

- Make sure newcomers are welcomed and engaged in conversation
- Offer a snack and drink if the setting is right (i.e. a home)
- Arrange seating so everyone in the group can see each other

Getting Acquainted

- **What is one takeaway from your last small group meeting? How are you doing putting it into practice in your life?**
 - As routine opener to group meetings, this question encourages individuals to apply your discussions in their lives. It also brings continuity & intentionality from meeting to meeting.
- **If you have a background in church, what is the tradition of baptism you're most familiar with, and how is it significant to you? If baptism is a newer concept to you, what thoughts or impressions do you have about baptism?**
 - This question sets the stage for the Bible Exploration and helps people get to know one another on a personal level.

Bible Exploration

- **Read Matthew 3:1-17 as a group and reflect on the baptism of Jesus. What statements stand out and why? Are there things you don't understand? Discuss.**
- **Have you been baptized? If so, why did you choose to? If not, what is stopping you?**
- **What does it mean when we refer to baptism as "going public" with your faith? How else can we go public?**
- **In his sermon, Mike explored the sacrament of baptism in the Bible and church history, and he made several statements about the importance of baptism in the New Testament. Did anything you heard challenge your point of view on baptism or Jesus? Which of Mike's statements below resonate most with you? Explain.**

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- Christ's first public act was to be baptized. Even though he was perfect, he was baptized to kick off his public ministry.
 - His final earthly words before going to heaven were about baptism.
 - He commands his followers to be baptized. We are expected to "go public" for Jesus.
 - It is a means of grace. There is a blessing there.
 - The record of the New Testament is that every believer who could was baptized.
 - I would submit to you that the bigger question would be, why in the world wouldn't you be? Or, I'll let Jesus ask it: In Luke 6:6 Jesus asked, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things I ask?"
- **How are you moved to respond to this week's discussion on baptism?**

Prayer

- Invite the group to participate in a time of "conversational" prayer. Each person may pray as often as he or she wants, but only 1-2 short sentences on one topic at a time. This lowers the barrier of participation for people unaccustomed to praying with others.

Wrap-Up

- Be sure to end the formal conversation on time.
- Thank newcomers for joining you, and invite everyone to the next meeting.
- Encourage people to linger for a few minutes, and do your best to have a personal interaction with each individual before he or she leaves.

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