

Converted to Baptism or Jesus?

By Steve Higginbotham

May I ask you a question? We all know of our obligation to be evangelistic. Hence, we try to find opportunities, walk through open doors that will allow us to talk to our friends, neighbors, and co-workers. But here is my question. When such opportunities arise, what do you talk about? What is the goal of your teaching? When you talk to people about Christianity, where do you start? Of what do you attempt to convince them first? I could venture a guess that many Christians begin religious discussions with their friends and neighbors by attempting to convince them of their need to be baptized. Now, I know many reasons why this is done and why baptism is important (yes, even necessary), but I also believe that this focus misses the primary emphasis of teaching.

Wouldn't it be much better to convince people they need to completely surrender their lives to the Lordship of Jesus rather than to just one of his commands? Rather than making baptism the goal of our preaching, shouldn't baptism simply be a natural and logical result of our preaching?

Someone may say that this distinction is neither here nor there, and that it doesn't really matter. After all, what difference does it make so long as they are baptized? Well, I believe it does matter and that it makes a great deal of difference. Have we not all seen people who were baptized because they were convinced by sound argumentation that they needed to be baptized? Sure we have, but have we not also witnessed many of these people who were baptized demonstrate very little commitment to Christ. It may be that in a matter of months, even weeks, they are never seen or heard from again. How does that happen? It happens because they were willing to be baptized, but they were not willing to do what it takes to be a disciple of Jesus.

Question: What good does it do to convince one he needs to be baptized when he is not convinced he needs to completely surrender his life to Jesus?

Friends, if the goal and focus of our teaching would be to convince people to submit to the Lordship of Jesus, then things like repentance and obedience will naturally follow. The real challenge is not convincing people they need to be baptized (we can do that and they can still be lost). The real challenge is convincing people to totally surrender themselves to Jesus.