

LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

[Spring Season: April 12 – June 14 | Fall Season: September 27 – December 6]

LEADER DETAILS

- **MAIN TEXT:** Acts 8:26-38; Matthew 3:13-17; Romans 5:1-8
- **MAIN IDEA:** Baptism is a public declaration that our hope is not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ.
- **GROWTH FOCUS:** Take some time this week to plan how your group can stay connected over Summer.
- **ICE-BREAKER:** Moved to the beginning of the discussion this week

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Full details at: emergence.church/digital-bulletin)

- **Totowa Updates** – The new eKids is open, we are in the temporary auditorium, and we have new service times! **Keep updated on changes here:** <https://emergence.church/totowa-updates>
- **College-ish - Mondays in Totowa @ 7:00pm - June 1 – July 6**
 - **The Why** - College-ish is a six-week session for young adults from ages 18-25 to grow, connect, and learn more about Jesus. For those who are staying local as we head towards Fall, the hope is for this to also serve as a bridge into a community group for long-term connection and discipleship.
- **Family Dedication - July 9th/12th - in both Ringwood and Totowa**
 - **The Why** - By publicly declaring their intent to raise their kids to love Jesus, parents will be encouraged to keep that commitment in the highs and lows of parenting. A great opportunity for those families to invite family/friends to hear the Gospel.

GETTING STARTED:

- **Pray:** This helps everyone prepare their heads and hearts as you turn to the discussion.
 - **Watch Community Extras Video** (length 1:46 – questions from video are included below)
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LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP:

[Leaders: These follow-ups are meant to offer some accountability while being low-pressure. Keep it casual, "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; it's always okay to pass.]

- **Outward Action:** Identify someone who may be drifting spiritually and take a step toward them this week through encouragement, prayer, or an honest conversation.
- **Inward Prayer:** Ask God, *"Where am I seeking the benefits of following you without the trust, surrender, and obedience that following you requires?"*

SERMON DISCUSSION

Prioritize meaningful conversation over getting through every question.

Icebreaker/Opening Section

This weekend we celebrated stories of lives changed through faith in Jesus. Take some time to share any baptism stories that resonated with you, or what impacted you most as you watched people publicly declare their faith. **Feel free to spend a lot of time on this if people are sharing.**

- What stories of baptisms from this past weekend particularly resonated with you? What impressions were you left with that moved you in your own relationship with Jesus after this weekend of hearing stories of life change?

Disconnected, Seeking, and Surrendered

Read Acts 8:26-38 (For groups who heard the Totowa Message)

Pastor Ryan described three places every person can be: uninterested in God, exploring God, or surrendered to Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch is someone who has moved from being uninterested to actively seeking. Even before he fully understands the gospel, we see God already pursuing him by sending Philip to meet him on the road, who helps explain to him what he is reading from Isaiah 53 and that it points to Jesus. Then we see the eunuch respond in surrender by being baptized immediately after receiving the truth of the gospel.

- What stands out to you as you read this account?
- For those who are willing, take a few minutes (around 5 if possible) to share your story of moving from disconnected, to seeking, to surrendered. What was that journey like? Who or what did God use along the way? What ultimately led you to place your faith in Christ, and what has life with Him been like since? If you're still exploring faith, we'd love to hear where you are in your journey and how we can best support you.

[Leaders: if all you get through is the icebreaker, and this section - that is a good night! So, no need to rush it. It's a unique night to pause and reflect on testimony.]

Our Story, Or Jesus' Story?

Read Matthew 3:13-17; Romans 5:6-8 (*For groups who heard the Ringwood Message*)

One of the surprising moments in Scripture is Jesus choosing to be baptized even though He had no sin. Pastor Tyler showed how Jesus succeeded where Israel failed and where we fail, perfectly fulfilling God's covenant as our representative. Because of that, baptism is not a declaration that we've become good enough, but that Jesus is our Savior who died for sinners. Many people delay surrendering to Jesus or being baptized because they don't feel ready, but the gospel begins with the reality that none of us are.

- What stands out to you as you reflect on these passages?
- Take a few minutes (around 5 if possible) to share your story. How did you come to understand who Jesus is and place your faith in Him? What obstacles did you face along the way—doubt, fear, pride, shame, distraction, or something else? What led you to finally trust Him, and how has your life been different since? If you're still exploring faith, we'd love to hear where you are in that journey and how we can best support you.

[Leaders: if all you get through is the icebreaker, and this section - that is a good night! So, no need to rush it. It's a unique night to pause and reflect on testimony.]

Heaven Rejoices

Read Luke 15:8-10

Pastor Ryan reminded us that part of the good news of the gospel is that no one is beyond God's reach, and heaven rejoices whenever someone places their faith in Jesus.

- Who is one person in your life that you're praying would move one step closer to Jesus? What gets in the way sometimes? What is an intentional step you might be able to take?
- If someone asked you why you follow Jesus, what would you tell them? What's your "good news" in this season of your life?

GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

- **Outward Action:** Share part of your testimony or faith story with someone this week. It doesn't need to be polished. Simply tell them something Jesus has done in your life.
 - **Inward Prayer:** Spend time thanking Jesus that your salvation rests on His finished work, not your own efforts, and ask Him to deepen your trust in His grace.
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PRAYER PROMPTS:

- Thank God for His grace and salvation through Jesus Christ.
 - Pray for those who are still exploring faith or wrestling with surrender.
 - Ask God to help you walk in the new life He has given you.
 - Pray for courage to publicly identify with Jesus and share your faith with others.
 - Celebrate the stories of life change represented through baptism.
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NEXT WEEK'S TEXT: Judges 14 & 15 (Samson Part Two)