

TAKE THE PLUNGE

HOW TO CONDUCT A BEACH BAPTISM

By Ron Henson

The Great Commission is a command that Jesus gave to the church. It reads “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age [Matthew 28:29-20].”

This command can be broken down into four separate parts: go, make disciples, baptize and teach. Each progressive action is a necessary part of the whole.

Three of the actions are personal in nature, but one is public. Baptism by immersion is the means Jesus gave us to publically profess our new found faith in Him. It pictures His death, burial and resurrection that makes our salvation possible. It also illustrates our death to sin, the burial of our old life, and our resurrection to walk in the newness of life that Jesus gives us.

Notice Jesus did not give any instructions on where we are to practice baptism. All we need is water. In addition to the church baptistery many churches in Florida use another readily water venue--the ocean. There is plenty of water there for sure.

There are many good reasons to plan a beach baptism--it's appealing to new disciples; it's a great gospel witness, it's a great family fellowship event for the church; and it encourages the church in their commitment to the Great Commission.

What are you waiting for? Take the plunge and plan your beach baptism. Here are some suggestions to help you make it a memorable event for your church.

PRAY:

- Ask God to lead you in planning for the event.
- Ask God to lead the church to embrace the event.
- Ask God raise up people ready to take this step in their spiritual journey.

PLAN

- Investigate possible venues for the event. Consider driving distance from your ministry area, parking, beach access, and possible picnic areas [pavilions are great].
- Some venues have facilities that would allow you to include a worship time.
- Choose a time in the year when seasonal weather patterns are favorable. Watch for hurricanes and thunderstorms.
- Book your site. Give yourself plenty of time sites fill up fast.
- Check with your county/city parks and recreation department for necessary permits.

- Put together a planning team for the event. Include food service, set-up, clean-up, signage [road signs, banner with church branding, service times, website] t-shirts.
- Put together a baptismal team to help with the actual baptisms.
- Secure someone to take photographs and video of the event.
- Plan a schedule for the event. [Time for baptism, worship time, and food.]
- Be clear about where everyone is to meet prior to the baptism. [It is usually best to eat after the baptisms rather than before.]

PROMOTE

- Make this a priority event for your church.
- Develop a graphic for the event to use in promotion.
- Provide t-shirts for the event.
- Encourage everyone to bring friends and family. [Especially baptismal candidates!]
- Show a promotional video in the morning worship service before the day of the event.

EXECUTE

- Make sure to have appropriate signage to direct people locations.
- Display your church banner so those outside of your church will know who you are and what you are doing.
- Gather on the beach for the baptism. Start out in a large huddle to introduce the candidates to be baptized and to have prayer.
- Have all the baptismal candidates go out in the water together. Go out far enough in the water to be able to safely immerse each candidate.
- Conduct the baptisms. [Usually done one at a time.]
- Celebrate on the beach with those who have been baptized.
- Take plenty of pictures and shoot plenty of videos.

CELEBRATE

Baptism is a great time of celebration. It is a time to celebrate new life in Christ. It is a time to celebrate the work that God is doing in the church. It is a time to celebrate the joy of fellowship and the opportunity we have to experience life together.

You might want to conclude with a time of prayer, even holding hands. What a witness you are expressing to others on the beach! You will find beach-goers are naturally drawn to the baptism event. Celebrate a visual testimony of a new life in Christ.

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