"The Church: Our Identification"

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] Let me invite you to open your Bible with me to Romans chapter 6.

! I've been in my mind for about two years and just kind of been waiting for the right time to share that with you.
And then the week after that, we will begin a new expositional study verse by verse through the book of 1 Timothy. But today, we're looking at our identification as a church, our identification as believers through believers' baptism, that we identify publicly as a believer in baptism.
Next week, we're going to look at the forever home for the body of Christ as we think about heaven.
And I hope that these number of weeks have been an encouragement to you as we've thought about what the Bible says our church should do, what we should be, how we should live.
Baptism is such a beautiful thing, and it's a beautiful time, a meaningful time in the life of the Christian being baptized as well as the local church.
[1:28] There's something very important that's happening. When somebody stands in front of their local congregation and declares through believers' baptism that they are one who is following the Lord Jesus Christ, they are making a public declaration that the Lord has saved them, that the Lord has brought them from spiritual death to spiritual life.

And my encouragement to all of you today would be to consider your walk with the Lord to see where you would fit in terms of obedience.
If you're not truly converted today, I would hope that this would be the very day that you would call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. If you have been truly saved but not baptized, I would hope that this would be the day that you would commit to follow the Lord in believers' baptism and to publicly declare in front of your loving church family that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus.
And if you have been truly converted and if you have been baptized after your salvation, then I would hope that you would enjoy every day of your life in obedience and walking with the Lord.
The way that I think it's best to think about how we would do this as a believer in thinking about today with baptism and last week with the Lord's Supper, I think the best way to consider that is salvation, identification, and celebration.
[3:10] Salvation's first. We don't do any good to get baptized before we are converted. Salvation's first. We don't take the Lord's Supper before we're converted.

That is what believers do. So salvation is first. Next would be identification through baptism. If you're truly converted, then you identify publicly with your church in obedience unto believers' baptism.
And then when you have been truly converted and baptized, then you celebrate with us in taking of the Lord's Supper as we talked about in detail last Sunday morning.
When we think about baptism, just a very, very quick overview of some of the background behind what we would call today as believers' baptism.
In the Old Testament, when a Gentile would be converted to Judaism, there were several things that that person would do.
[4:12] One of them was a form of baptism. When John the Baptist was in his ministry, Matthew 3.11 says that he said this, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me, speaking of Jesus, is mightier than I.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. We also have the background of Jesus Himself that was baptized. Matthew 3 goes on to record that Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by Him.
John would have prevented Him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to Me? But Jesus answered him, let it be so now, for it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

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Then he consented, and when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were open to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him.
And behold, a voice from heaven said, this is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Jesus, of course, is not baptized as a sinner. He never sinned.
[5:23] He is showing us what we are to do. He is picturing for us not only the ministry He would have in the days to come, but picturing for us our response to that.

And so, when Jesus is being baptized in the Jordan, He is picturing what will be coming of His crucifixion and His resurrection, as well as giving for us a picture and a model that we are to follow as believers, which leads us to what we would know today as believer's baptism or Christian baptism.
Matthew 28, 19, we know it as the Great Commission. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
We've seen that already today in our worship service. And in this Great Commission of Matthew 28, not only does it tell us that we are to baptize, but we are to be making disciples, and we are to make disciples, it says, of all nations.
This is our authority. And so, if you wonder who are we to tell our neighbor to repent and trust in Christ, it's on the authority of the words of Jesus.
[6:37] If you wonder who are we to go into a different nation and call on them to repent and trust in Christ, it's on the very words and the authority that Christ has given to us.

We are to share the gospel, baptize those who believe into water as a way of publicly identifying with Christ, and then train and disciple them to obey and to follow Christ all the days of their life.
So, when we think about believer's baptism today, I want to give you three thoughts to help us in our mind, I hope, connect what the New Testament says about baptism and why it matters.
Number one, we are baptized into Christ. We are baptized into Christ. The New Testament speaks of us being baptized into Christ.
This is what some will refer to as a dry baptism, meaning it's a picture, it's a metaphor. In the baptistry, we have literal water for a water baptism. But when you first believe, when you truly come to faith in Christ, you're baptized into Him.
[7:52] You have found Romans 6. Look with me at verse 3 in Romans 6. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ, Jesus, were baptized into His death?

We were buried, therefore, with Him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
For if we were baptized in a resurrection like His. When you first come to Christ, you're baptized into Christ.
Not talking about the waters of baptism. Talking about what happens spiritually as we have this union with Christ. We see it in Galatians 2.20.
I have been crucified with Christ. You're not literally physically crucified on a cross, of course, but we are spiritually crucified with Him. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
[9:04] So the New Testament speaks of baptism not as that which by itself saves you, not as that which completes the deal.

Baptism first is this picture of a spiritual union with Christ. We are fully immersed into Him by faith, union with Him, His righteousness given to us.
And what I want to emphasize here with this first part of what it means to be baptized into Christ is this, that if you are water baptized without truly knowing Christ, it would be of no consequence.
So parents, don't rush your children into baptism before they have truly repented.
Thinking that is going to somehow save them or somehow give them extra credit with God. We don't want to rush that.
[10:12] Now there are some who are saved at a very early age, truly converted. They've truly repented. And we want to baptize those who have a true saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

But it's not helpful for our children if we rush them to do water baptism before they truly come to faith in Christ.
We start by first being baptized into Christ. Before we ever look at water baptism, we want to ensure that we truly have converted.

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We truly have repented. We truly belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. I was, by God's grace, saved at a young age. By the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in my life, I've never doubted that.
I've never wavered or wondered in that. I know that He saved me. I know that it was His grace that did so. And I'm thankful that at a young age, the Lord saved me.
[11:17] And I'm thankful at a young age, I was able to follow the Lord in believer's baptism. But if you rush your child to be baptized before they truly have repented, then it creates this confusion in them as they begin to think, well, I've been baptized.

I think the church must have thought I was truly converted. And it creates confusion in their life. As important as baptism is, and we'll talk in a minute about why it is so important, let's please make sure we're biblical to understand that the first baptism that matters is that baptism into Christ, being justified, being saved, repenting of our sin, truly belonging to the Lord Jesus, being saved by grace through faith.
We are baptized into Christ. Now, for those who have been baptized into Christ, those who have been truly converted, number two, we are baptized into water to symbolize our salvation.
We are baptized into water to symbolize our salvation. This is the baptism I want us to think about today, this baptism in water by immersion.
In the New Testament, the words used that refer to baptism are words that mean to dip or to immerse. That's why as Southern Baptists, we baptize by immersion, what you just saw today.
[12:50] The person goes into the water, and they are laid under the water and brought back out of the water. This is the mode of baptism we see in the New Testament.

Matthew 3.16, when Jesus was baptized, it says He immediately went up from the water. Why? Because He had been down in the water. Even in Mark 1, this is the baptism of John the Baptist. All the country of Judea and all of Jerusalem were going out to Him and were being baptized by Him in the river Jordan and confessing their sins.
Acts 8.38, He commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and He baptized him. So we would practice what we call baptism by immersion. Believer's baptism. This is after someone has come to faith in Christ. The reason why you stand in front of your church and are baptized is to publicly proclaim that you have been saved by grace through faith, that you have been joined in union with Christ by the Spirit's gift of salvation.
[14:06] You are publicly declaring that you're not ashamed of the gospel, but you are walking with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so water baptism, what we would do up in the baptistry behind me, is a decisive and a public declaration of your faith in Christ.

It doesn't make you saved. It doesn't make you extra saved. It doesn't make you double saved. It doesn't make you twice saved. It doesn't give you extra points with God.
It is a public declaration where you stand in front of the local church and say, I have been saved by grace through faith, and I am not ashamed of the gospel, and I will follow Jesus for the rest of my life.
Make sure that as you teach your children, as you teach your teenagers, that they understand that while baptism is a very significant part of the Christian life and a very significant part of worship in the local church, that believer's baptism is for believers, those who have truly been converted. When you're baptized, it shows a commitment, a personal commitment to the Lord. And in our water baptism, we see a picture of the gospel.
[15:35] Whenever we do a baptism here, we always have someone that writes out the gospel in their own words. Sometimes they read it themselves. Sometimes the pastor baptizing reads it. But it's always the words of the one who is being baptized.

And it's their chance to articulate what Christ has done. Their chance to articulate how they have been saved by the grace of God, by the loving mercy of our God.
And when you see someone in the baptistry behind me, and you see them there at the beginning, it's a picture of Christ standing there on the cross. And as they are lowered into the water, it's a picture of Christ being lowered into the grave.
And when they are brought up out of the water, it's a picture of Christ being brought to life out of the grave. We are watching a visual representation of Christ crucified, buried, and raised back to life. And so when we baptize, you see the visual representation of Christ on the cross in the empty tomb. You also hear the articulation of the gospel as the one being baptized shares what the gospel message is.

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[16:50] And you hear a public declaration at the end of every baptism. We ask them, what is your public profession of faith in Christ? They're going public.

They're drawing a line in the sand. And they are saying, I have been saved by Christ, and I identify as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.
I know sometimes it's tempting in our culture to follow the lines of thought where someone says something like, isn't our faith supposed to be a private thing?
And the answer is no. It's personal, but never private. It's something that happens in your heart, but it's to be lived out by your life.
And so we're baptized into Christ. That's our justification. We are baptized into water by immersion as a public declaration that we belong to Jesus.
[18:00] And so if you've been baptized into Christ, salvation, then you are baptized into water to symbolize our salvation.

One of the beautiful realities that we need to understand also is a third thing, and that is that we are baptized into a family of faith.
faith. That as the New Testament teaches the life of the Christian, that we've looked at this for a number of months now, that we're not by ourself. We're not spiritual lone rangers.
We are reminded that we are baptized into a family of faith. That as you are baptized, that local church who is baptizing you is taking on the responsibility of teaching you, and training you, and equipping you.
You are joining your life together with the other brothers and sisters in Christ, a part of that church, to say, I will join with you to do Great Commission work.
[19:01] You're not simply saved and baptized and left on an island. You are brought into a family of faith. This is why there needs to be some thoughtfulness behind how a church does baptisms.

I try to always be careful, and I mean this, not that in any way I'm ashamed of what the Bible says, not in the least. I want to be careful to never unintentionally or in an unnecessary way to be disrespectful of another church that's never my heart.
But I do want you and need you to understand what we do and why we do it. And so, if you've belonged to a church that did this differently, my desire is not in any way to be demeaning to them or to their ministry or to the people who maybe baptized you, but I do need you as a church to understand the conviction and the thoughtfulness and the biblical reasons why we do what we do.
So, when we baptize here, we would never just baptize someone silently where something else is going on, the church is singing or the choir is singing and we just baptize you and send you on your way and baptize you and send you on your way because there needs to be a public declaration of your faith in Christ.
It's a public identification and I think it's important that we verbally say that we're following Jesus. I think it's important that the gospel is presented in words at the baptism because otherwise, what happens are people just seem to think that what's going on up there is simply some kind of ceremony or ritual, but the fact is, if it's a ceremony or ritual separated from the declaration of the gospel, it's less than what it's intended to be.
[21:08] So, when we baptize, we baptize one at a time verbally with the gospel presented and asking each person to publicly declare their faith in Christ.

Also, we would baptize as a part of a church service because you are being joined into a local church.
You are joining with other believers. As in the New Testament, when the Lord in His providence was getting words to believers, New Testament books and letters, He wrote letters to the churches because it's a biblical expectation that Christians gather with churches.
And nowhere in the New Testament do you see somebody say, well, I didn't get a chance to hear that letter read because I'm a Christian but I don't go to church. I'm a Christian but I don't attend services.
I'm a Christian but I don't do that. I just worship God in my own way. You don't hear that. In the New Testament, churches receive letters. Letters are read in the church because the expectation in the Bible is those who are physically able gather with God's people on the Lord's Day.
[22:33] Of course, there are people who are sick. Of course, there are people who are homebound. Of course, there are people who are physically unable to attend. But the norm, the expectation is that God's people gather with the church on the Lord's Day and that's why we would

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baptize on Sunday on the Lord's Day when the church is gathered.

So, we would not do baptisms at camp. We wouldn't do baptisms just at a youth group gathering on a Friday night.
We wouldn't do baptisms in that way because you are being baptized into Christ first and foremost, into water as a picture, and into a church family.
You are joining that local church family. And so, we want a recognized leader of the church leading out on that baptism, the gospel being presented, the person publicly declaring their faith in Christ with their church family able to witness that as support and as love.
Let me be very clear again though. These convictions, while they are very important, and I believe very biblical, in no way do I want to cast dispersions on other churches who love Jesus, who preach the gospel, who may practice things differently.
[24:03] In everything we've looked at through these last three months, there may be other churches who love Jesus, who preach the gospel, and they do things differently. And I want to say that I am grateful for and appreciate every church who preaches the gospel, who points people to Jesus, who offers salvation to people through the Lord Jesus Christ and none other.

Though there may be differences in practice or form or conviction, I am thankful for every congregation and for every pastor who preaches the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
I recognize in our own city, in our own state, across the nation, there are people who would do some of these things differently. I recognize in this sanctuary today, some of you were a part of churches who did things differently.
And I have no desire in any way to be demeaning to another church that exalts Christ and preaches the gospel. I do, however, have the desire to help you to understand the biblical convictions behind what we do.
And I think it matters. When someone is baptized in our church, we need to make sure that they truly belong to Christ. And so before someone is baptized, we spend time with them.
[25:26] Our children receive a book that we've written, takes them through about six different lessons they walk their child through to make sure they're clear on what is the gospel, what is baptism, assurance of salvation, how to communicate their testimony, how to build spiritual disciplines in their life.

We want to make sure they're clear in the gospel. We want to make sure mom and dad has discipled their own child and then we baptize them. Teenagers and adults, we meet with them to make sure as best we can that they truly belong to Christ because it creates much confusion when a church is not careful with that and they're baptizing people who are not truly converted.
So we want to baptize people that we have spent time with as best we can to ensure as best we can that they truly belong to Christ. We do that as the church gathers on the Lord's Day.
We do that where the gospel is spoken, not assumed, and we ask them to publicly declare that they are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.
and if they have not truly been converted, then whatever would happen in the baptistry would be of no value.
[26:44] The power behind the baptism is the gospel that it proclaims. The power of the baptism is in the believer publicly standing for Christ and the church receiving them into their family and saying, we stand with you.

You're not alone. You're not by yourself. We are your church family. And we love you and we'll teach you and we'll train you and we'll equip you.
You're in Romans 6. Go back to the left just a couple of pages to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. Look at verse 16.
This is really the heart of what we are declaring when we're baptized publicly. For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written the righteous shall live by faith. faith. I'm not ashamed of the gospel.
[28:04] When a person is baptized they are declaring I'm not ashamed for the world to know. I'm not ashamed for the church to know. I'm not ashamed for my family and friends to know. I follow Christ.

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And it would do us well to remember that in some parts of the world this costs something to do that. In some parts of the world this costs everything to do that.
And we want to make sure that we are bold in our proclamation and bold in our faith and that we are clear in our baptism to say I have been saved by grace through faith and I follow Christ.
baptized. Now why would it be that many Christians would not have yet been baptized? It's quite common in our membership class people come to the membership class and they may have been in church for a long time but they've not been baptized.
There are times in our own church where someone is baptized and they've been a believer for years but they never had been baptized. Maybe for you today this may be you. You may be a true believer but you've never been baptized.
[29:22] Why would that happen? Let me give you a few things to think about. One, sometimes Christians are not baptized because they've just simply never been taught to be baptized.

Maybe in your church you were truly converted but your church didn't practice believer's baptism or maybe you were truly converted but your family weren't a part of a local church and so it wasn't something you were taught to do.
It may be secondly that they have been baptized before their salvation then got saved and so they didn't feel like it was necessary.
It's quite common for someone to be baptized as a child or a teenager and they haven't truly been converted. Maybe they just wanted to please mom and dad. Maybe they just wanted to please their youth minister.
Maybe their friends were being baptized. They didn't want to be left out or left behind and so they were baptized but then later on they actually come to faith in Christ. Well I think it's important if that's been your testimony that you would be baptized after your salvation because that's the whole picture of identification with your baptism that you're saying I am a believer and if you were baptized before your salvation there was no conversion to give testimony to.
[30:53] Third sometimes people have been baptized because they don't want people to know they've never been baptized. Maybe you got saved years ago and you've been coming to church every Sunday and people would certainly assume that you've been baptized and maybe even feel convicted that you should because you never have been but you don't want to do it because if you get baptized today you're afraid everybody's going to say well wow why weren't they already baptized?

I just want to say if that's you today don't let pride get in the way of following Christ ever. Don't ever care more of what someone else will think of you or say about you more than you care about pleasing and honoring the name of Christ.
Maybe you are someone who had never been converted but you tried to act like it you kind of were faking it you maybe got so good at faking it that everybody in the church assumed you were a believer maybe even worst of all you faked yourself and you kind of started to even believe you were a Christian when in your heart of hearts you had never repented and trusted the Lord.
And now you fall under conviction of the Holy Spirit and know that you are to repent of your sin and be saved and be baptized but to do that everybody is going to say wow that person just got saved and what have the last ten years been about?
And I would say to you again don't ever let pride get in the way of obeying the Lord. Maybe people would be surprised that you've never been baptized.
[32:36] maybe people would be surprised that you never truly were a believer. But far better to live with the joy of knowing you have glorified Christ.

And if you had to deal with the questions of people who don't understand what happened that is a far better situation to go through than to try to keep up the charade of pretending to be something you're not all the while the Lord knows what's true in your heart.
I beg you don't let pride get in the way of following the Lord. There's a fourth reason for some they let fear get in the way. It's not so much pride but it's fear.
They don't want everybody looking at them. Fear of water, fear of people's attention, fear of people maybe mocking them. let me say again, don't ever let your reason for disobeying the Lord be to try to get favor with people.
The most important thing about any of us is that we honor and obey the Lord. and if you say, yeah, but I don't want everybody looking at me.

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[34:03] Yeah, but I don't want everybody knowing this about me. Yeah, but I don't really want to have to get my hair wet in front of people. We're talking about obeying the one who gave up his life for your salvation, who paid for your sin to save you from an eternity in hell and to give you the glory of heaven.

Can I say with grace and love in my heart, don't let fear get in the way of standing for the one who gave his life for you.
There's one other reason why a lot of people have not been baptized. It's actually quite common. They don't want to upset their family or their past tradition.
This is quite common. And before I articulate this, let me just say, I've heard this from many people. I don't have any one of you in mind.
I don't want anyone to think I'm talking about you. I'm not. This is something that comes up quite often. But someone will say something like, I know that I should be baptized, but my parents raised me in a church that's different, and if I got baptized, it would upset my mom and dad.
[35:33] Or I was baptized a different way before my salvation 20 years ago, 50 years ago, 60 years ago, and I don't want to upset that church who baptized me as a baby, or that church who baptized me by sprinkling, or whatever it may be.

It's quite common for someone to say, the third testimony would be that they're a believer, but they're not willing to obey Christ because more important to them is making sure that a friend or a family or a tradition does not get offended.
I'm thankful for our families. I'm thankful for moms and dads who loved us and took care of us and helped us be fed and clothed.
I'm thankful for people the Lord used in your life to teach you, to encourage you, to pray for you. And I would never want us to be disrespectful or demeaning to people in our life or to other congregations.
But would you please think through this in a biblical perspective? If you were to say, given the choice between obeying Jesus or pleasing another human being, please choose Christ every time.
[37:19] Not in a cruel way, not in a rude way, not in a heartless way, but it is concerning to me when somebody says, I see what the Bible says.

But I don't want to upset tradition. I see what Jesus calls me to do, but I'm 50 and my 75 year old mom wouldn't like that.
I love your 75 year old mom. I'm thankful for everything she did for you. I'm thankful she loved you. I'm thankful that she took you to church.
But she did not give her life that you would be saved. saved. I'm thankful for the people who preached the gospel to you. I'm thankful for the people that God used to open your heart to help you to see the gospel.
But that preacher did not shed his blood that you would be saved for all eternity. I don't ever want us to be unkind.
[38:42] I don't ever want us to be cavalier cavalier in our words or our tone or our language. I don't ever want us to be disrespectful to those who may disagree with us. But the gospel is not follow Jesus until it's inconvenient.

Or follow Jesus until it costs you something. Or follow Jesus unless someone in your past would want you to do otherwise.
The gospel is I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Christ saved me. Christ died for me. Christ raised me unto eternal life.
Christ paid for my sin. Christ delivered me. Christ secures me. Christ will call me home to heaven when it's my time.
Everything about my salvation is all of Christ. If that's the gospel then I beg you and plead with you follow Christ above everything else.
[39:55] So what should you do? If you've been baptized by immersion after your salvation you should rejoice and give thanks to God.

you should give thanks every day for his grace and his mercy and walk in obedience. If you've been saved but not baptized after your salvation that I encourage you on your connection card to write down on that connection card I would love to talk to someone about baptism.
We'd want to sit down with you talk with you through it but we don't want to we're not trying to press you or twist your arm to please us we'd want to make sure that you know the gospel that you're

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honoring Christ but if you've never been baptized by immersion after salvation our prayer today would be that this would be the impetus that would lead you to do that and third if you've never truly been saved then the most important thing for you is not water baptism it would be to repent of your sin and to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation it's an interesting thing to talk about baptism if you've never stood where I stand right now you likely think well that's a pretty easy sermon it's baptism we're Southern Baptists everybody gets it the most what word would I use angry conversations
I've ever had directed toward me in my life of ministry have been two things refusing to marry someone who's not a Christian or living in sin and talking to people about baptism that don't want to be baptized maybe that's surprising to you it's pretty common and I just want to say if for any reason what I have shared today upsets you hurts you please understand I love the people who God used to shape you and mold you and to bring you to faith in Christ and I want to give honor and respect to every church and every Sunday school teacher and every preacher who preaches the true gospel of salvation by grace through faith but I cannot let what anyone would prefer to take present over to what
Christ has revealed and if you've not been saved I want to call you this day to repent and trust Christ as your savior if you have been saved but not baptized after your salvation I want to call you to follow in believers baptism and publicly identify with Christ and the church who loves you to say I am not ashamed of the gospel and if you are a believer who has been baptized after your salvation let's walk in full obedience to the one who has saved us and when you see someone saved as we've talked about in here many times when someone is saved or when someone is baptized let's make sure our response is not congratulations like you just got a college scholarship or way to go as if you just got your college degree when someone is saved or baptized let our first words be about
[44:12] Jesus who died for us and who by his grace saves us when your grandson calls you on the phone and says grandpa I got saved today let your first words be praise God who saved you when a child in your Sunday school class that you teach gets baptized and they say to you I'm getting baptized in two weeks teacher let your first words be how good is our God it's not semantics it's theology he saved us he keeps us he will call us home all praise to Christ alone amen lord I thank you for your word I pray that your people today are encouraged

I pray lord that it creates within us a desire to obey you a desire to follow you all the days of our life in the name of Christ we pray amen

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