

# Lesson Five: John the Baptist

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Unlock with Questions: 10:05-10:20    6:32-6:47 (15 min)

1. Who is a “wild man” or “wild woman” whom you know personally? A fun story is allowed! :-)
  2. What does deep devotion to a person look like to you?
  3. Have you ever had a friend leave you to become friends with someone else?
  4. Can you state the mission of your life in one sentence?
  5. Which do you think is more important: knowing who you **are** or knowing who you are **not**?
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Unlock New Thoughts: 10:20-10:45    6:47-7:12 (25 min)

Mental image of J the B: wild, unkempt hair; fiery eyes; sheer fearlessness exuding from him. He was unique, sure of his purpose, inwardly strong. With him there was no favoritism, and he was confrontational with those who were religious or governmental leaders.

## ***THEMES OF JOHN’S LIFE:***

**Prophecy - Malachi 3:1** “I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.”

Is 40:3-5: A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord! Make straight paths for Him! Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads will become straight, and the rough ways smooth. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed. All mankind together will see it.”

How do you prepare for a special guest? You get all your junk out of the way. You straighten up. How are you preparing the way for Jesus to enter into the hearts and lives of your family and friends and co-workers?

What is this great reversal John is referencing?

- First shall be last, last shall be first;
- to live, you must die;
- God helps the humble and opposes the proud;
- God chooses the weak to do His will, to shame the wise, to bring Himself glory;
- to be great, you must be like a child.

- Looking for a Savior: Overthrowing the Romans is not the point of revolution. The real revolution is repentance and living whole-heartedly for God
- Mountains and hills of power, prestige, and position will be laid low, while valleys of poverty and lack and dependence will be made high.

**SUM:** John was the last prophet. He was tasked with calling people to repentance, declaring God's coming, and confronting sin. He was impartial, fearless, and fully devoted to God. He was fine with being different and did not need the approval of the state, the synagogue, or people. His passion for God eclipsed all else in his life. He could deal with silence and lack for the sake of the good news of a Savior. Can we?

### **Family - Luke 1**

- 5-25: Gabriel tells Zechariah he'll be a joy and delight, great in the sight of the Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit, turn hearts of fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:14-17)
- 39-45: Elisabeth's baby leaps!
- 57-66: "John"
- 67-80: Z's song \*\*76-80\*\* John's description: strong in spirit, prophet of the Most High, go on before the Lord to prepare a way for Him; to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God.

**SUM:** John was a joy. His life was anticipated, celebrated, and directed. He took his mission to heart with the support of his godly parents. He was the prophecies' herald, the one to open doors, the one to soften hearts, the one to call people to God-based change. His life story was based in the mission of God: His tender mercy calling to every person. "Come home. I love you. I want you in my arms. Step away from your sin; be sorry; let it go. I am worth it!" Are we telling our culture, our family, our work setting, the same thing?

**Ministry - Mt 3:1-17**: training time (desert, wilderness, hidden, quiet); to others; to Jesus

### **John's three major concepts:**

- 1. Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Luke 3:8**
- 2. A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. John 3:27**
- 3. He must increase; I must decrease. John 3:30**

Who was he? Not the Christ, not Elijah, not the prophet, not worthy to untie Jesus' sandals; he was the voice of one calling in the desert.

**Bottom line: REPENTANCE (Luke 3:3). "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains upon him." John 3:36**

- Mt 3:1-12 Ministry: he focused as God does, on the *heart*, not *inheritance* (ref to Abraham). No false security!
- Mt 3:13-17 Jesus' baptism: John's humility
- **John 3: John's inner life:**
  - John let them go. He himself pointed them to Jesus, acknowledging that following Jesus was more important than following him.
  - John's ego was not wrapped up in his ministry or following; it was wrapped up in God. John's identity was not wrapped up in his ministry or following; it was wrapped up in God.
  - **Temptation** to cling, to envy, to be selfish. Somehow people had the idea that John was in competition with Jesus, that they were in conflict, not working toward the same goal. (Whose ministry is bigger and better?) John did not see it that way at all.
  - "A man can receive only what he has been given from heaven." Honest acceptance of his role, his part to play in the big story of Jesus. He knew he had a divine, God-anointed place in God's plan, but also knew there were God-given limits on his ministry. He knew who he was and who he wasn't.
  - "The bride belongs to the Bridegroom. These people are not mine. They belong to Jesus." John was like Jesus' best man. John did not have to cling to people for purpose; he actually opened his hands and shooed them away, toward the Savior.
  - "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30). "He must become greater; I must become less." Similar to John 1:15: "This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.") Honest understanding of Jesus as Savior and himself as herald (also John 1: "...witness to testify concerning the Light," vv 6-8). More focus on **Jesus**, less on **us**. **His** ministry, not mine. **His** will, not mine.

**SUM:** The spotlight **must** shift to Jesus. It's right and good; John releases it with the ease of one who knows who he *is* and who he is *not*, one who accepts his role, one who is not greedy for gain, one who is humble, one who can look away from himself and look to the Savior. Can you do that? Can you shift the spotlight

to Jesus? Can you fight the temptation to envy someone else's ministry or call?  
Can you accept the role Jesus has given you?

### **WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT JOHN'S MINISTRY**

Luke 7:24-35

Jesus commends John. He wasn't a socialite; wasn't concerned with others' opinions about him; wasn't overly concerned with his appearance; wasn't concerned with luxury, not concerned with things of the world. He was concerned with his call and with people's repentance. He was the plow so the rich seed of God's word would grow in their hearts when Jesus spoke.

v. 28: a thought, not an answer: John could never say Galatians 2:20. (Right side of the cross timeline.)

John stood his ground in an dissatisfied generation of observers, not participants, who were content to judge from the outside, the appearances rather than the heart.

**John:** ascetic wild man judged as a demoniac; **Jesus:** lush & glutton who hung out with sinners. The people were never satisfied; their hearts were lukewarm; God was locked out.

**“Wisdom is proved right by all her children.”** Both asceticism and enjoyment have their time and place. Both men were in God's will even though they had different styles. God had called each to a different path; both obeyed. We need to find our place on this spectrum and obey God in our purpose and call without despising others on the spectrum.

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Unlock the Scriptures: 10:45-11:10      7:15-7:40      (25 min)

Describe a time in your life when you've doubted something or someone important.  
How has God used “wilderness” or “desert” times in your training as a Christian? Are you drawn to solitude? How do you listen to God - how does He teach you directly?

#### **Read Matthew 3:1-17.**

How do you describe John's appearance?

What shocks you about how he related to people?

Look up **Romans 6:4**. How does the imagery about baptism explain John's passion for repentance?

How are you [not] like him in speaking to people who are curious about authentic Christian living?

What does “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” look like in your life? Is there one thing you need to repent of today? What fruit would you expect to come from that change?

The Jews took great security from the fact that Abraham (Genesis 12-25) was their spiritual father and physical/family lineage. God often pictured Israel as a vine with a strong root system that started with Abraham. How does that give you insight into verses 9 and 10? What was the point of the Jews’ claim to Abraham?

This was an agrarian society, so John uses an agricultural image to help them understand what is going on. If you want to understand verses 10 and 12 more fully, use your phone or tablet to look up what happens on a threshing floor. Our internet connection is called “CSPC Guest.”

What is John’s main message? **Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!**

How does this impact you, right now, at this very moment in your life?

What does REPENTANCE mean?

What do you think John meant in verse 11?

Now, in preparation for **Insecurity** and **Infamy**, please read [Luke 7:18-35](#) and [Mark 6:14-29](#) with your table.

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Lock It In: 11:10-11:25      7:40-7:55      (15+ min)

**Insecurity** - [Luke 7:18-35](#) “Are You the One, or should we expect someone else?” TREMENDOUS QUESTION.

The wild one, the man of the desert, the free spirit who cared so much for repentance was locked in a dungeon cage. I’m sure Satan sought to destroy his faith altogether; I imagine a great spiritual battle in his cell.

BEAUTIFUL: JOHN TOOK HIS QUESTIONS STRAIGHT TO JESUS.

Even the faithful have questions and doubts. Don’t be prideful; run to Him! Take your questions and doubts to Jesus! He will not think you are bad or ridiculous. He will not turn away from you in disgust. He will give you the opportunity to renew your faith in Him by showing you who He is. HE IS THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS.

Are You the One ...

- to save us from our cursedness and sorrowful situations?
- to bring victory back to our people/into my weary life?
- to triumph over the Romans/my sin, all that oppresses me? to bring God to me?

I am the One ...

- who brings wholeness and health to your bodies, your souls;
- who secures your spirits;
- who gives sight to many who are blind,
- who puts the lame on their feet,
- cures the outcast with leprosy,
- brings sound to the deaf, raises the dead, and gives the poor good news.

“Now ... exercise your faith. Believe.” Wise Jesus knew John would know **Isaiah 61**, the passage with Jesus’ purpose statement. That would literally confirm His identity to John. Jesus is pleased by faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Read Hebrews 11, the Faith Hall of Fame. Listen to Jesus as He tells you who He is ... then exercise your faith. You exercise your physical muscles; you must also exercise your spiritual muscles.

**Infamy** - Mark 6:14-29 Beheaded. Also Luke 3:19,20: John rebuked Herod the tetrarch (// a governor, one of four co-emperors) because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done. Herod added this to them all: he locked up John in prison.

Tell the story. (Salome = step-daughter but also his niece)

J the B boldly spoke the truth and it cost him his freedom, his voice, and his life. Are you willing to pay the price for telling the whole truth, regardless of the power of the people you are speaking to?

J the B died because a woman held a grudge (Mark 6:19). Are you holding a grudge against someone? It’s like acid in your heart, bringing destruction. It’s like arsenic, poisoning you and everyone around you. What kind of mother asks for a man’s head on a platter as a reward for her sensual daughter’s dance and a drunken, self-centered promise? Don’t be like **Herodias**, holding a grudge! Don’t be like **Herod**, afraid of what people think! Don’t be caught in the position of **Salome**, naive and sensual! Be like John, even at great cost.

Following God costs. It doesn’t always look like you thought it would. Death is a fast passage to the next phase of life; don’t be afraid.

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Lock It Down: 11:25-11:30      7:55 - 8:00 (5 min)

What aspect of John's life has moved you the most?

What have you learned from his life?

Apply to yourself and circle of friends Jesus' quote about John: "Wisdom is proved right by all her children" (Luke 7:35).

Is your life warped by the bitterness of holding a grudge as Salome's mother Herodias' was?  
What are you going to do about it?

In one sentence, describe John the Baptist.

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Bonus Features: More Resources; Conversation Starters at the Table or  
in the Car

A thought or question you can bring up with others in the next few days

How do we prepare for a special guest in our home? (John prepared the way for Jesus.)

Think about how you exercise physically. How do you exercise spiritually?

In what ways can you decrease in order to let Jesus increase in your life at \_\_\_\_\_ (school, work, etc)?