

Community Group Discussion Questions

"Audience of One" Matthew 3:1-12 June 22, 2019

Getting Started

Messages that are most memorable are the ones that are insightful, impactful, but most of all...impressionable! What John the Baptist had to say, how he said it, and how he lived it encourages us all to live a life worth imitating!

What was the most inspirational speech you ever heard? Who gave it and why did it affect you?

Going Deeper:

1. The Uniqueness (behind) the Message: (Vs. 1-6)

1. His Assignment:

1. **Preach the Way:** *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Vs. 2)
2. **Prepare the Way:** *"Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."* (Vs. 3)

The Jewish people had been waiting 400 years to hear from God. The last Old Testament book (Malachi) was a long way off in the rear view mirror, and they were desperate for a word from God, specifically a word that Messiah/Savior was coming. However, their life situation was such that they were under Roman control at this time, so their idea of a Savior was not a spiritual Savior, who would save them from their sins, but a Political/Military/Revolutionary savior who would deliver them from the hated Romans. John's preaching was spot-on, but what people heard was something else. Their ears weren't listening for personal repentance toward salvation. Their ears wanted to hear freedom from political oppression. When you listen to God's voice through prayer, a pastor's sermon, or bible reading, do you typically 'hear' what you want/need to hear, or do you truly hear what God is trying to say to you? How can you change your approach so that you get God's message every time?

2. **His Appearance:** *“Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist”* (Vs. 4)
3. **His Appetite:** *“and his food was locusts and wild honey”* (Vs. 4)

When we see these descriptions, we typically think John was one weird guy, wearing strange clothes and eating strange food. But actually, his clothes were very typical and his diet was too. Do you sometimes have a hard time hearing what someone has to say because their ‘exterior package’ is strange to you?

4. **His Appeal:** *“Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him”* (Vs. 5)
5. **His Approach:** *“and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins”* (Vs. 6)

You can see how eager the people were by how they flocked to John, confessing their sins, and being baptized toward repentance. What steps have you taken in your life to draw near to God’s message and Person? Have you believed in Jesus as Savior? Have you been baptized to identify yourself with Christ?

1. **The Urgency (in) the Message:** (Vs. 7-12)

1. **Turn from Religion:** *“Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”* (Vs. 8)

When we ‘repent’ from something, we think differently about it. We walk away from it, and turn toward God’s truth and righteous choices. If someone has truly repented from their previous beliefs and lifestyle, the evidence will be there, like fruit hanging from a tree, or grapes from a vine. What evidence or proof can you see or can others see to show that you are saved by Jesus and filled with His Holy Spirit?

2. **Trust not in your Race:** *“And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham”* (Vs. 9)

None of us can hope to go to Heaven because of the faith of someone else. It doesn’t matter what anyone in our family believes or how much they pray for us. Each of us has to individually and personally put our trust in Jesus to be saved. Having said that, do you have any people in your family or among your friends

who has lived an inspiring Christian life before you that helped you want to believe in Jesus too?

3. **Time is now to be Ready:** *“Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”* (Vs. 10)
4. **There is a day of Reckoning:** *“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”* (Vs. 12)

The Bible teaches in many passages about this day of judgment. **See Acts 17:30-31.** Many people will be surprised one day that people they thought were Christians actually were not, and many they thought were not actually were. Do you know that you know that you know that you belong to Jesus? **See Galatians 5:22-24.** Is the evidence of His living presence in your life?

Take Away: Do we see John the Baptist as being “extra” or do we see John the Baptist as the “example”?

- **Obvious vs. Oblivious:** Is my faith obvious or are people oblivious to my faith?
- **Courageous vs. Cowardice:** Is my faith courageous or am I cowardly with my faith?
- **Engage vs. Entertain:** Are we a church that values engagement over entertainment?

Prayer: