

Prepare the Way

2 Just as the prophet Isaiah had written: “Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, and he will prepare your way.” 3 He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, “Prepare the way for the LORD’s coming! Clear the road for him!”

4 This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached that people should be baptized to show that they had turned to God to receive forgiveness for their sins. 5 All of Judea, including all the people of Jerusalem, went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. 6 His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

7 John announced: “Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to stoop down like a slave and untie the straps of his sandals. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!”

9 One day Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. 10 As Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens splitting apart and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

12 The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness, 13 where he was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was out among the wild animals, and angels took care of him. Mark 1:2-13 (NLT)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- Share your baptism story with the group.
- What are the major milestones/markers in your faith journey?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

V2-8

- O: Why is John the Baptist so important to the Jesus story (v.2-3, Luke 3)? How would you describe John by his dress, diet, and message in modern terms (v.6)? Why was he so popular with the masses (v.5)? What was John’s message (v.3,7-8)?
- I: v.2-3 are from Malachi (400 years prior to Jesus) and Isaiah (400 years prior to Malachi); What difference does it make that the gospel (Good News) is so deeply rooted in history?
- I: How does John’s ministry prepare the way for Jesus (aka, what’s the point/bid deal)?
- I: What do we learn about Jesus from this opening section about John the Baptist (v.2-3,7-8)?
- A: V.3,7-8 gives a simple summary of John the Baptist’s message. If someone wrote a summary sentence or two about your life message (based on what you say/how you live), what would it be?

V8-11

- O: Why did Jesus go to John, basically an Old Testament prophet, to be baptized? (Note: this will be a good place to teach the group how to use the “parallel scripture reference notes” in most bibles; help them see the same account in the other gospels, ex. Matt. 3:13-17).
- O: How was our baptism different than the baptism John the Baptist was offering (v.8)? Difference/Significance?
- O: Identify each person of the Trinity in the passage (v.10-11) and define/discuss the importance of the Trinity.
Note: One way to start this question would be to ask the group: “What is significant about the dove and the voice from heaven?”
- I: Despite Jesus’ greatness, He came to John for baptism. What does this tell us about Jesus and how God works?
- A: How does God’s view of Jesus (v.11) parallel/illuminate God’s view of us? How does that impact you personally?

V12-13

- O: What follow this high baptism experience for Jesus? What is the lesson here for us?
- O: How did Jesus’ baptism prepare Him for His temptation in the desert?
- I: From a historical perspective, many of Mark’s reader were Christians in Rome (who were being persecuted by Nero in the late 60’s A.D., some facing wild animals in the coliseum as persecution). How do you think they responded to v.12-13?
- I: What does Mark’s reference to angels (v.13) tell us about Jesus’ humanity?
- A: What encouragement do you find here for facing your own temptations?

Recommended Follow-up:

- **Pray:** Pray for our church’s message (that it would help prepare and introduce people to Jesus), that we would see many come to know Jesus and be baptized, that the Holy spirit would be active in our church, and that we would be a holy people, with strength and encouragement to face temptations as they come.
- **Respond:** Read/Study 1 Kings 17 - 2Kings 2 to see how John’s ministry is similar to Elijah’s
- **Read:** Next week’s sermon (6/6/2010) will focus on Mark 1:14-40. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

* As discussed in Riverside’s HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. These guides rely heavily on a few different study guides; including “LifeChange Series” (ISBN 0891099107), N.T. Wright’s guide (ISBN 9780830821822), James Hoover’s guide (ISBN 9780830830046), and the Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A)