

**The Power of Your Story**  
**Knowing Your Place in God's Story**  
**John 1:19-42**

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**Text Introduction:** We are in a series of messages on the Power of Story—not just any story, but the story of God's activity in our lives. We are examining New Testament stories of individuals sharing their story. We want to specifically see what God would teach us from these stories about sharing our own story. Today, we consider the witness of the one called John the Baptist. Each of the four Gospels portray John the Baptist's role in being a forerunner to Jesus' message. That is, God used John the Baptist to "prepare the way" for Jesus. Let's consider the way that the Gospel of John (a different John) gives us the story of John the Baptist's testimony.

**Text:** <sup>19</sup> This is John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

<sup>20</sup> He did not refuse to answer, but he declared: "I am not the Messiah."

<sup>21</sup> "What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?"

"I am not," he said.

"Are you the Prophet?"

"No," he answered.

<sup>22</sup> "Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"

<sup>23</sup> He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said."

<sup>24</sup> Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup> So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

<sup>26</sup> "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know Him.

<sup>27</sup> He is the One coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."

<sup>28</sup> All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is the One I told you about: 'After me comes a man who has surpassed me, because He existed before me.' <sup>31</sup> I didn't know Him, but I came baptizing with water so He might be revealed to Israel."

<sup>32</sup> And John testified, “I watched the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He rested on Him.

<sup>33</sup> I didn’t know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One you see the Spirit descending and resting on—He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God!”

<sup>35</sup> Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God!”

<sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, “What are you looking for?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?”

<sup>39</sup> “Come and you’ll see,” He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about 10 in the morning.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. <sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” (which means “Anointed One”), <sup>42</sup> and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon, son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which means “Rock”).

**Introduction:** The purpose of the Gospel of John is to point people to Jesus. The testimony of John the Baptist fits well into this overall purpose of the Gospel. John the Baptist’s testimony shows what it means to “meet, know, and follow Jesus.” (NIV Application Commentary).

Our purpose is to point people to Christ. How are we going to point people to Christ? What are the characteristics of the person who effectively points people to Christ? Pointing people to Christ starts with our understanding our place in God’s story. John the Baptist is a perfect example of one who understood his place in telling his story.

### **The Characteristics of the Witness**

- Humility—Mark’s account gives us the detail that people were flocking to John the Baptist. Luke gives us the detail that some were debating even whether or not John the Baptist was the Messiah. John’s account of Jews coming to interrogate him shows the notoriety that John the Baptist was gaining. What was his response? On every level, he sought to deflect any attention to himself and point all attention to Jesus.

We must do the same. We must resist all temptations to make our story about us and make sure the story is about Jesus.

- Holiness—Along with John the Baptist’s humility, the other noticeable feature of his witness is that he modeled repentance. He preached repentance. He lived repentance. He lived holiness. This made John the Baptist a clean witness and because he was a clean witness, he was an effective witness. If we desire to truly point people to Jesus, we must be concerned with our

own personal holiness. Without holiness, we give people a distorted picture of what it means to follow Jesus.

- Consistency—The third thing I see in John the Baptist’s life is that he was a consistent witness. With the Jewish leaders who came to interrogate him, he was consistent in pointing to the one who would come after him. With his own associates, he was consistent in pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

This week, I accidentally ran across this Bible that belonged to Bro. Perry. An inscription in the front indicates that the Bible was given to him by his parents on the occasion of his high school graduation in 1943. Among an assortment of other handwritten notes, Bro. Perry had written “What the world needs is Jesus.” In humility, accompanied by holiness, and with steadfast consistency, let’s make sure that the world hears the story about Jesus.

### **A Word of Caution to the Witness**

When we consider the life of John the Baptist, we also understand a word of caution. Many say that there is a bias against Christians. No doubt, I would agree. But, I would add that this is not the first time in history that there has been a bias against Christ and against His followers. So, let us be clear in offering a caution.

Some will misunderstand us. Others will criticize. That’s what happened to John the Baptist.

Ultimately, here’s what happened to John the Baptist. Mark 6 tells us that King Herod had John the Baptist beheaded at the request of his wife—Herodias. It turns out that Herodias did not like John the Baptist because he had confronted Herod about his marriage to Herodias. You see, Herodias had been Herod’s brother’s wife. Under conviction, we assume, the Scripture says that Herod, though disturbed by John the Baptist’s preaching, heard him gladly and was in awe of him.

Because there will always be enemies of Jesus, if we choose to follow Jesus, we will always have some who misunderstand and criticize us. That’s our caution. But, that’s not the end of the story. We also see one last thing.

### **A Confirmation to the Witness**

Just as Jesus revealed Himself to you, He will reveal Himself to others.

John the Baptist did what witnesses do. He revealed what had been revealed to Him. He said what he saw and trusted God with the results. Twice, he says, “I didn’t know Him, but...” (verse 31, 33) The truth is—you and I have a lot more knowledge about Jesus than John the Baptist did, and yet, the knowledge that he had was enough to convince others to follow Jesus. Why is this?

You are not in this by yourself. We can trust that the same Jesus who has revealed Himself to us will reveal Himself to others.

One of my preacher heroes died this week—Dr. Roy Fish. Dr. Fish preached for us here back in 2007. As a way to sort of mourn his passing, I listened online to an archived message of his. In the message he told a story about Dr. L. R. Scarborough, former President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He said that on one particular Sunday morning, Dr. Scarborough was in worship when the congregation as a invitation hymn were led in singing the hymn, “Rescue the Perishing.”

Listen to the words of the hymn:

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;  
weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

Refrain: Rescue the perishing, care for the dying; Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

Though they are slighting him, still he is waiting, waiting the penitent child to receive;  
plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently; he will forgive if they only believe.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it; strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;  
back to the narrow way patiently win them; tell the poor wanderer a Savior has died.

Dr. Fish said that Dr. Scarborough became so moved by the words of this hymn. He became so broken for some of the men in the congregation that he literally got out of his seat and approached the men and begged them to walk forward with him and trust Jesus as Savior. At one point, another man in the congregation yelled out to Dr. Scarborough, "Hey, Lee, don't get too excited; it's only a song."

I'm afraid that for way too many Christians the command to tell our story about Jesus is just a song or just an idea.

I pray we find our place in God's story and would be willing to care for the dying, weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.