

Lesson 69

TEXT John 1:15-30

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; James 5:20

OBJECTIVE The students will be made aware of and be able to tell why one of the greatest responsibilities of a Christian is to point sinners to Christ.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord. — John 1:23

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. — 1 Peter 3:15

ANSWER TITLE: A Witness Without Words
SEARCH TITLE: John the Baptist

Reference Information

This lesson takes place in the summer of 26 A.D., the year John began his ministry at the age of thirty. Tiberius was the Caesar (Caesar being the title taken by each of the Roman emperors).

John the Baptist was ordained to be a Nazarite from his birth (Luke 1:15). A Nazarite was a man who made a vow to do some special service for God. They were not to drink wine, cut their hair, or come into contact with a dead body.

He dwelt by himself in the wild and thinly-populated region west of the Dead Sea. His dress was that of the old prophets, a garment woven of camel's hair (2 Kings 1:8 and Matthew 3:4) attached around the body by a leather girdle. A girdle was worn by both men and women to hold the looser garments. The common girdle was made of

leather, a finer one was made of linen, embroidered with silk and frequently studded with gold, pearls, or other precious stones. Today we would compare a girdle to a wide sash or belt.

His food was of the desert, locusts (Leviticus 11:22) and wild honey (Psalm 81:16). Locusts have been used as a food source from the earliest times. Some people dried their locusts in the sun and ate them with milk. The most common method was to pull off the legs and wings and roast them in an iron pan. Then they were thrown into a bag, and eaten like parched corn. Sometimes they were ground and then mixed with flour and water and made into cakes. They could be eaten roasted with salt, smoked, boiled, stewed, or fried in butter. They resemble shrimp in taste. At the present time they are eaten only by the poorest of people.

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YOUR OPENER

John the Baptist

TEXT: John 1:15-30

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; James 5:20

KEY VERSE: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. — 1 Peter 3:15

RESPONSES

1. Gabriel announced John’s coming birth. John’s mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah. The point of this question is to bring out that John the Baptist was a special man with a special call.

2. While John preached repentance, within our text he was pointing to Christ as the Lamb of God (verse 29). Hopefully, the students’ responses to the second part of the question will bring out that because Jesus bore the sins of the world upon Himself on the cross, our sins are forgiven and taken away when we repent of them. Deeper study could include a discussion of the two goats offered by the Children of Israel (Leviticus 16:5-22). This discussion should bring out that Christ fulfills the offering of both goats—one was made the sin offering and the other became the scapegoat. The priest laid both his hands upon the head of this second goat and confessed all the iniquities, transgressions, and sins of the Children of Israel. The goat was then taken into the wilderness and let go, thus becoming a symbol of taking away the sins of the world.

3. John the Baptist’s chief mission on earth was to **tell of the coming of Jesus**. In other words, he was to be a **forerunner** of Christ. John even witnessed unselfishly to **his own disciples**, etc. The point of this exercise is to emphasize that John’s desire to point people to Christ was so strong that he would even subjugate his own personal feelings in order to do this. Discuss with your students that, contrary to natural human inclination, John discouraged his disciples’ attachment to him, and encouraged them to follow Christ instead. See also John 3:28-30.

4. Who art thou? What then? Art thou Elias? Art thou that prophet? What sayest thou of thyself? The discussion stemming from these questions can further develop the thought presented in question 3. John would not even say his name, and pointedly avoided any type of personal recognition. He characterized himself only as a “voice of one crying in the wilderness.”

The time—God’s time—had arrived! The Messiah, Jesus, was about to be revealed to the world. People everywhere were groaning for deliverance from sin and God had now sent His “only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” But all the smallest details foretold in God’s plan were to be accomplished. Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 had spoken of a specific person who was first to come on the scene as the forerunner of Christ. He was John the Baptist.

1. Six months before Mary was told she was to give birth to the Son of God, who announced to Zacharias the birth of John the Baptist, and what was John’s mission in life to be? See Luke 1:13-19.

2. Within this lesson’s text, what was the theme of John the Baptist’s remarks? Relate this theme to Isaiah 53:4-7, and tell in your own words what taking away the sin of the world might mean.

3. John the Baptist’s chief mission on earth was . In other words, he was to be a of the coming Christ. John even witnessed unselfishly to and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” See 1:29 and 36.

4. What are the five questions the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked John, and what answer did he give to each?

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What did Jesus say about John the Baptist? See Luke 7:28

6. The word “witness” occurs at least seventeen times in the Gospel of John. Using a dictionary, define the word *witness*. How did this apply to John the Baptist? See John 1:34.

7. How does witnessing apply to Christians today? See Acts 1:8; 2:32.

8. What lesson could we learn concerning our witnessing for Christ from the fact that John said he was just a “voice”?

9. Think of several people you know who need a Christian witness. Then pray and purpose to seek the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in witnessing to them and leading them to the Lord.

Thought Provoker: If you were to be paid \$10,000 for each soul you helped to win for Christ, how much harder would you be working at witnessing for Him?

5. Jesus said there was no greater prophet than John. Discussion of this question could profitably bring out that Jesus said that John’s ministry, great as it was, was still under the dispensation of the Law and the prophets. However, those who believe the message of Jesus Christ have a greater advantage, being members of the Kingdom of God. In the Book of Hebrews we are told of some of the greater privileges and opportunities the New Testament saints have: better revelation, better hope, better Priesthood, better covenant, better promises, better sacrifices, better possessions, and better country.

6. Among the definitions of the word *witness* are: “attestation of a fact or event: testimony”; “one who has personal knowledge of something”; and “to bear witness to one’s religious convictions.” John the Baptist was very faithful to bear record to all who would listen, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

7. Allow time for the students to give their answers. These will probably express the importance of witnessing for Christ, which is one of the greatest responsibilities that a Christian has. How important is the baptism of the Holy Ghost in helping people point sinners to Christ? Discuss that while they receive a measure of the Spirit when they are saved and sanctified, it is vital to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost in order to become more effective witnesses.

8. The answers to this question will probably be varied, but the discussion should center around the thought that John was not interested in being seen or honored, but that he wanted people to repent and to know that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. This should be the goal of all Christians—not to be seen of men, but rather that Christ might be seen through them. It is important that the life we live speaks of Christ. At the same time, we should be ready always “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

9. This could be an opportunity for the entire class to indicate, perhaps by raised hands, that they have someone on their hearts whom they wish to see saved. The class could join together in a few moments of quiet prayer for those on the hearts of the class members. This hopefully will create a burden for those who need salvation.

YOUR WRAP-UP

Reference Information (continued from page 19)

John came to the banks of the lower Jordan River to be the Elijah of the prophecy in Luke 1:17. The whole land was stirred by the preaching of this strange, rugged, fearless man of God proclaiming the Messiah and repentance for everyone. About a year after he baptized Jesus at Bethabara, a place near the Jordan River and about twelve miles south of the Sea of Galilee, he was imprisoned by Herod, Tetrarch (or ruler) of Galilee. Assuming that John began his ministry shortly before he baptized Jesus, it lasted about a year and a half. Thirty years of seclusion. A year and a half of public preaching. A year and four months in prison. Then the curtain. This is a brief summary of the man who ushered in the Savior of the world, and of whom Jesus said there had not been born a greater (Matthew 11:11). John did no miracles (John 10:41).

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

- What kind of man do you think John was?
- Name one outstanding spiritual trait of John. How would development of this trait help you in your Christian witnessing?
- What does this word *witness* mean?
- What are the spiritual requirements for becoming an effective witness for Christ?
- What did Jesus say that tells us of the greatness of this man of God?

- Why was John sent to the world?
- What were some things John taught the people?
- In the ANSWER story, how did Brad show that he was a Christian?

THINGS TO DO

Take a stopped watch to class. Point out that it looks fine, all parts are there. It has only one problem—it's not running. Those who are not saved are like this watch. They are not fulfilling the purpose for which they were made. It is our duty as Christians to tell others about Christ.

Role play the events of Luke 3:3-14, choosing class members to portray John the Baptist, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the publicans (tax collectors), and the soldiers.

Bring a newspaper to class. Read several headlines illustrating that most of the news of the day is not good news. Point out that *Gospel* means "good news," and it is our duty to publish it.

Using the blackboard or overhead projector, compile a

class prayer list. With the aid of the students, determine methods of witnessing to some of these people. Perhaps some are ill and can be visited in the hospital or at home. Pray for the direction and power of the Holy Spirit in motivating the class to witness.

What we do as Christians should be to point people to Jesus and not be building ourselves up in the eyes of others. John was this sort of man. Being a witness for Christ was John's goal. Make an acrostic puzzle for your class to complete. (An acrostic is an arrangement of words in which certain letters line up to make a word.) Use the word WITNESS as your main word. Think of words that describe ways of witnessing and fit them into the main word. Sample puzzle:

W o r s h i p
 w i l l i n g n e s s
 t e s t i f y
 p e r s o n a l w o r k
 l o v e
 g o o d d e e d s
 v i s i t a t i o n

Answers for ANSWER

Witness for Jesus

Follow the arrows to solve this maze. When you make a poor choice you will run into a dead end. When you come to THE END you will have made a complete story and some good choices.

START

A new girl came to school today.

I smiled at her.

I told her my name.

I wouldn't talk to her.

I asked the Lord to help me.

The other kids made fun of me for being nice.

I felt horrible.

I had a bad day.

I loaned her a pencil.

I didn't talk to her anymore.

She didn't say "Thank you."

We went outside to take a walk.

I decided she was shy.

I asked her to have lunch with me.

I told her what a nice kid I am!

I told her to ignore them.

The other kids pointed and laughed at us.

She said, "Yes."

I ate as quickly as I could.

I lost a friend before I made one.

I asked her about her family.

She didn't go to Sunday school so I asked her to go with me.

Then I left her alone.

She told me she wanted to be my friend.

I asked her to come to my house.

She's coming to Sunday school with me next Sunday!

THE END