

Trust Over Certainty: What an Unexpected Baptism Teaches Us About Faith

There is a moment in the life of John the Baptist that does not get nearly enough attention. He is standing in the Jordan River, doing what he has been called to do, baptizing people who have come to repent, to turn from half-hearted living and surrender fully to God. Crowds have traveled from all over Israel to participate in this spiritual renewal. John is in his element.

And then Jesus walks into the water.

John freezes. He tries to talk Jesus out of it. The logic is airtight: his baptism is for repentant sinners, and Jesus has nothing to repent of. Everything about this moment feels backward. So John pushes back. He says, in effect, I am the one who should be baptized by you. Why are you coming to me?

Jesus does not offer a lengthy theological explanation. He simply says that this is what God requires, and that they need to carry it out. That is all. No detailed roadmap. No guarantee of how it will all unfold. Just a quiet, firm call to obedience.

And John says yes.

That moment captures one of the most essential and demanding principles of a life of genuine faith: trust over certainty.

The Tension We All Know

Trust and certainty are not the same thing, and most of us spend a great deal of energy trying to turn trust into certainty before we will act. We want to see the outcome before we take the step. We want assurance that the risk will pay off, that the sacrifice will be worth it, that nothing will go wrong.

But that is not trust. That is calculation.

Real trust is a conviction to obey God even when we cannot see how things are going to work out. The parents dropping their child off at a college in another state, praying it is the right decision but not knowing what lies ahead. The family facing a health crisis, choosing a path of treatment and believing it is right while the outcome remains uncertain. These are not moments of certainty. They are moments of trust.

John did not fully understand why Jesus needed to be baptized. Theologians have since offered rich insight into what that moment meant — Jesus identifying with sinful humanity,

receiving public introduction as God's plan of salvation, being empowered by the Spirit, validated by the Father, and demonstrating the humble obedience that would define his entire life and mission. But standing in the water that day, John was not aware of any of that. To him, it looked absurd.

He trusted anyway.

Growing in the Grace of Giving

One of the most concrete and challenging places where trust over certainty shows up in everyday life is in the area of financial giving. Almost every person who has spent any time in a community of faith carries a quiet sense that giving is meant to be part of their spiritual life. There is something deep inside most of us that genuinely wants to be generous. But the moment we move toward real, sacrificial generosity, the questions come rushing in.

What if the economy shifts? What if something breaks? What if I need that money next month?

That internal tension is not simply a financial question. It is a question of trust.

Scripture speaks directly to this. In 2 Corinthians 8:7, the apostle Paul urges believers to excel in the gracious act of giving, in the same way they excel in faith, speech, knowledge, and love. Giving is not presented as a duty to be endured. It is presented as a grace to be grown in.

So how do we grow in it? Three words offer a practical and biblical framework: first, best, often.

First

Giving to God first — before the mortgage, before the bills, before the expenses of daily life — is an act of trust that says, I am depending on you for what comes after this. Proverbs 3:9 calls this a first fruits offering, a concept rooted in the agricultural world of Scripture.

Farmers were instructed to give from the first cut of the harvest, not to wait and see what was left over. Giving first required faith that God would sustain them with the remainder. And Proverbs 3:10 follows with a promise that those who honor God this way will find their barns filled with plenty. The principle is not give to get — it is that genuine, faith-driven generosity activates a spiritual law of reciprocity that cannot be outrun.

Best

God deserves our best, not our leftovers. King David understood this when he declared that he would not offer to God something that cost him nothing. Giving our best involves sacrifice, and Scripture consistently points to the tithe — ten percent of one's income — as

a biblical standard of that best offering. Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Malachi all affirm this practice, and Jesus himself, in Matthew 23:23, affirms tithing while calling his followers not to neglect the deeper matters of justice, mercy, and faith alongside it.

For those who feel that ten percent is an overwhelming place to start, the invitation is simply to begin. One percent. Then two. Build the rhythm intentionally, and let the practice of giving shape the posture of your heart over time.

Often

Generosity is not meant to be occasional. Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to set aside a portion of their earnings each week — a regular, rhythmic habit of giving.

Consistency in giving does something in us over time. It loosens the grip that fear, greed, and materialism can take on a heart. It is one of the primary tools God uses to liberate people from the world's hold on their lives.

The Invitation

John stepped into the uncertainty and baptized Jesus. He did not have all the answers. He had a word from the Lord and a willingness to act on it.

That is the invitation extended to every person who wants to grow in faith. There will be moments when God asks something that does not fully make sense, where the outcome is not visible and the risk feels real. In those moments, the question is always the same.

Will we choose trust, or will we wait for certainty?

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

- Matthew 3:11
- Matthew 3:13
- Matthew 3:14
- Matthew 3:16
- 2 Corinthians 8:7
- Proverbs 3:9
- Proverbs 3:10
- 2 Samuel 24:24 (David's statement about not offering to God what costs him nothing)
- Leviticus 27:30 (a tithe of everything belongs to the Lord)
- Deuteronomy 14:22
- Malachi 3:10
- Matthew 23:23
- 2 Corinthians 9:7 (each person deciding in their heart how much to give, God loving a cheerful giver)
- 1 Corinthians 16:2 (each week setting aside a portion of money earned)

****Alluded To Without Direct Citation****

- John 1:29 (John pointing to Jesus and declaring him the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world)
- Luke 1:36 (the familial relationship between Mary and Elizabeth)
- Philippians 2:8 (Christ humbling himself in obedience)