

- **Main Passage:** John 1:19-28
 - **Purpose:** To help men understand that John the Baptist lived a life that pointed to both a clear purpose and an unwavering standard.
 - **Session Snapshot:** John the Baptist was a man who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. His role was to prepare the way for the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. John's role was clear, and he knew it well. John's standard was God's standard, and he didn't muddy those waters. He was committed to his role, regardless of the cost, and committed to God's standard. As men of God, we too have our own Kingdom purpose. And with it, we all share the Lord's standard. And we must believe in, commit to, honor, and defend this standard, just as John showed us.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be continuing a video series on John the Baptist that is part of a larger study on men of the Bible.

If John the Baptist is your first study in the Real Men curriculum, even though it's your second session as a group, consider re-introducing yourself and having the men in your group re-introduce themselves. Then, ask for volunteers to share any thoughts they took away from last week's session. If you want to pass around a contact sheet, again, or do any other second-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Rick mentions John the Baptist as one of his heroes of the faith. Who are some of your Biblical heroes of the faith? Is John the Baptist on your list?**
- **In the example in Luke, we see that John the Baptist did not have a passive approach to sin. When you examine our society, even from within the church, do you see certain sins that we are strongly against and others we are maybe more passive about?**

- What about the sin in your own life? What sin are you more likely to be passive toward? What is the danger there?
- What do you find in your life that's easy to be bold about? When it comes to boldness in your life, is God and His standard first and foremost? Or do you find your faith to be more of a struggle to be bold about than other things?
- When it came to moral judgments, John the Baptist had a clear commitment to adhering to God's standard, and he wouldn't compromise that for anything. Where might we be tempted to mix in other standards with the standard of God?
- What could be the result of giving other standards equal footing (or even greater emphasis) than God's standard? How do we see this playing out now in our country? Does social media come to mind here? Maybe national, political, or social standards? What happens when God's standard for what is right or wrong is A thing and not THE thing from which our judgments are made?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- In this passage from the gospel of John, we learn a lot about John the Baptist in only nine verses. By telling us who he isn't, John shows a tremendous self-awareness of who he is (and, even more importantly, what he has to do). Our passage here shows how John the Baptist was singularly focused on who he was and what he held to.

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at John 1:19-28. As Rick stated in the video, John is a man to be admired as he models for us how we are to approach such fundamental things in our lives as identity, boldness, and the standard we ultimately adhere to.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation, as well as the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read John 1:19-28. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **John the Baptist had a firm grasp on who he was and what his role was. As a man of God, you fulfill multiple roles. As it specifically relates to the Kingdom of God, what is your role? John knew his. What's yours?**
 - Answers will vary. This should go past the roles of husband or father or provider, although those can certainly be components of the answers you get. God has placed each of us in a unique situation; no one is the same. You may not get any answers here as the men in your group may not have spent much time asking themselves this question. The goal is to get their wheels turning.
- **John's role, as prophesied in Isaiah 40:3, was "the voice of one calling out, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" How did this play out? How did John prepare the way?**
 - *Answer:* John accomplished this in several ways, so hopefully, you get several answers. He preached the message of repentance. He let the people know the Messiah's arrival was imminent. He baptized. In addition to his message and ministry, John drew the ire of religious and government officials, eventually leading to his death. As we see, there are multiple similarities to what we would see with the earthly life of Jesus Christ.
- **Ultimately, we are to lead people to know Jesus Christ. How does that look in your life?**
 - *Answer:* As we know, this can take on many forms, so hopefully, this inspires a good discussion. Possible answers would involve evangelism, discipleship, missions, serving, mentoring, and teaching. When given one of those answers, such as discipleship, for instance, dig a little deeper. How does that look in our lives? What are some ways that this is manifest in what we do?

FINALLY, direct your group's attention to Luke 3:7-9. Then, ask:

- **We see a great example here of the boldness of John The Baptist as he was faithful to call out sin for what it was, taking a stand for God's standard. Are you bold in your faith? What impedes your boldness for the Lord?**
 - *Answer:* Most of us, if we are honest with ourselves, don't have the boldness we wish we did, and there can be several reasons for this. Thus, it shouldn't be difficult to get feedback on this one. Fear of standing out, fear of missing out (on sinful pursuits), creating a potentially awkward moment, possible altering of, or the loss entirely of, friendships, and a lack of confidence are just some of the potential impediments.

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Do you know the role God has for you?**
 - If this is a question you struggled with earlier, spend some time this week nailing this down, or at least pursuing the answer more diligently with God in prayer and reflection.
- **Are you fulfilling that role? If not, what is stopping you?**
 - Examine some of the obstacles that stand in the way of you becoming who God wants you to become.

- **Is God's standard your standard?**

- Do you let other standards guide your life? If so, what is the danger of this?

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them, and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.