

- **Main Passage:** Matthew 11:1-15
  - **Purpose:** To understand that our timeline is dependent on the will of God and His purpose for us in advancing His Kingdom.
  - **Session Snapshot:** John the Baptist is in jail, mostly for speaking out boldly against Herod. He sends his followers to ask Jesus if He really is the Christ. He wants to know if the work that he's been doing has been worth it. He may even expect that Jesus is the Christ and expect that Jesus will free him from his current situation. What if Jesus doesn't? What if this is the end?
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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, remind your group that this is week 5 of their video series on John the Baptist and that it's part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

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.

THEN, 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:

- **Have you ever found yourself asking God if you've done enough to be lifted out of the awful situation you've found yourself in?**
- **What does it look like for you to rest once you've completed a task or a job? This doesn't have to be just like John the Baptist, who had one job, although it was one big one. Do you tend to fret over your work once you've completed it because it wasn't perfect enough for you? Or do you rest knowing your task is done?**
- **What are the spiritual implications of this when it comes to the work God has for us?**

- Can you think of a time when you've thought, "Why didn't God do this for me? I've seen Him do it for others. Why not me?"
- How is it tempting to let the life and ministry of someone like John the Baptist intimidate us into lives of passivity or mediocrity?

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

- As we've studied over the previous four weeks, John the Baptist was a man's man. He was bold in his speech. He was wise in his teaching. He was "Elijah who is to come"! He was also 100% man, and in this moment, perhaps a little more concerned with his self-worth than the Kingdom. Jesus still paid him the highest compliment possible. Let's spend a few moments dissecting this passage to see what we can learn from John's request and Jesus's response.

## 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 Matthew 11 and some additional Scripture. As Rick mentioned in the video, God has the ultimate say so when it comes to our timeline in the advancement of His Kingdom. That path that each one of us takes to the end of that timeline is different, although it hopefully ends the same. These passages will help us examine what that looks like.

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

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THEN you or a volunteer read Matthew 11:1-15. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Is John the Baptist questioning or wavering in his faith?**
  - Answers will vary. But recall that John had introduced Jesus as the one who would "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" and judgment. He had seen the Spirit descend on Jesus and declared him "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." He believed Jesus was the Christ! John may be legitimately confused by what is happening. He is in prison while Jesus is carrying out a ministry that is more healing and less judgment. It seems as if John realizes that maybe he misunderstood Jesus's purpose in coming.
- **Why does Jesus answer the way that he does in verses 4 and 5?**
  - Answers will vary. Jesus is telling John's disciples about (and perhaps even showing them) the miracles that He has performed. These miracles coincide with what the prophet Isaiah says to expect from the Messiah (Isaiah 29:18, 19; 35:5-10). John would have known this. Upon hearing this evidence, the decision would be squarely up to John whether to believe or not. *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* puts it this way, "It is only by faith that one can see the power of God working in

the words and deeds of Jesus. Not even Jesus can decide for John and quietly reassure him. John, and every man, must make that 'leap of faith' for himself."

- **What does Jesus mean in verse 6?**
  - Answers will vary. This could be seen as a small rebuke towards John the Baptist and his disciples. Jesus wanted them to respond differently than the Pharisees. They needed to be open to God's plan, even if Jesus' ministry didn't match what they expected from the Messiah.
- **Why did Jesus eulogize John the Baptist before the crowd?**
  - Answers will vary. In eulogizing John the Baptist, Jesus lauds him more than any other person he spoke about. John was the forerunner to the ministry of Jesus. He opened the people's eyes to their need for repentance and salvation and then pointed them to the Saving One. If you don't know that you need to be saved, what good is a Savior? Jesus knew the importance of John and displayed it with these words. Another purpose here could be that Jesus was pointing toward the fulfillment of Scripture. If the Jews would accept Jesus as Messiah, then John would be the total fulfillment of Malachi 4:5 as the forerunning Elijah.

FINALLY, begin to close by saying something like this:

- **As we've studied the last few weeks, John the Baptist knew his role. He knew he had been sent to prepare the way for the Lord. He had been raised with one purpose, one goal, and one job in mind. And he did it. He did it with such boldness and integrity that it landed him in prison and eventually beheaded. So why question Jesus? Because John was human. He made the same mistakes we sometimes make. The Jesus that John heard about didn't fit the Jesus that he wanted. How often do we wish that Jesus fit more into our line of thinking? How much easier would it be if Jesus was who we say He is and not who He says He is? But Jesus knows that about us! He knows we are selfish and prideful, and sinful. That's why He responded to John the way He did and why He tells us the same thing. It sounds a lot like "I am who I say I am. I am who Scripture said I would be. You've done your job; trust in me to take care of the rest."**

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:

- **After listening to Rick and studying these passages of Scripture, some of us need to ask ourselves, "Am I even in a position where I can hear God's call on my life? Am I in a right relationship with God? Have I made that salvation decision?"**
- **For others of us, the evaluation we need to engage in is how we live our lives.**
  - Some of us need to ask, "When is the last time I put my purpose and my call in the Kingdom of God ahead of my plan? Am I fulfilling the job that God has for me?"
- **Some of us need to evaluate how we're embracing our purpose.**
  - We need to ask, "How can I take my focus off of me and make sure my focus is on Christ? How can I remind myself that the goal is not to complete the task, but the goal is Christ?"

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.