

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide **TRUE GREATNESS**

John 1:19-35 (SB 05.15.2022)

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Leonard Bernstein, who used to be the conductor of the world-famous New York Philharmonic symphony, was once asked by a reporter, 'What's the most difficult instrument to play?' His answer was surprising. 'Second violin. I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm... now that's a problem. And yet, if no one plays second, we have no harmony.' Bernstein was speaking tongue in cheek of course, but the point he was making is true. There is something inside all of us that wants to be first. In today's world everyone is vying for the spotlight. Everybody wants their 15 minutes of fame. They want to be seen. Heard. Famous. Thanks to social media, we've seen the rise of the 'influencer.' Gain a following, and then use your platform to pitch your stuff. That's the formula. That's what makes someone like John the Baptist stand out so much. Instead of fighting for center stage or clinging to the spotlight like everyone else, John eschewed it. Instead of saying, 'Here I am! Look at me!' he spent his whole life saying, 'There's Jesus, look at Him!' Throughout his ministry, he constantly deflected attention away from himself and onto Jesus. Let's get into our study...

1. What spoke to you from Pastor Danny's sermon?
2. Bring a mirror to the group and either pass it around or hold it so people can see it. Ask: "What do you see?" You will surely hear varied responses as people describe what they see reflected in the mirror.

When people look at a mirror, we rarely ever pay attention to the mirror itself; we focus on what the mirror reflects. A mirror is an apt description of a Christian. Our goal should be that we so reflect Jesus that people are not aware of us, but they are keenly aware of the way we reflect. A life that reflects Jesus is truly a great life. In the life of John the Baptist, we get an example of how to do this.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:19-30

1. How does our culture determine who is important or worthy of attention?

John moved out into the middle of the desert. He lived as a hermit, wore clothes made out of camel hair, and ate locusts (Matt. 3:4). He made a point to insult pretty much everyone of importance. For example, he called the religious Pharisees a brood of snakes (v. 7). He publicly rebuked the ruler of the region and later got himself thrown in prison and ultimately beheaded (14:3-10). Some might look at John the Baptist as a man of wasted potential. But John's life can be summed up in verse 29: "Here is the Lamb of God."

2. How did John point others to Jesus instead of pointing to Himself?
3. What can we learn about following Jesus from John's words and actions?

BREAKTHROUGH! in 2022

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:31-34

There was a time when we might have known facts and stories about Jesus yet not have believed in His true identity and confessed Him as Lord. At some point, though, we had a personal encounter with Jesus and saw Him as He really is. For John, that moment came during Jesus' baptism. John suddenly realized that his relative, whom he thought he knew for so long, was more than just a relative. He is the Messiah, the one and only son of God.

1. What are some experiences that have shaped your understanding of Jesus?
2. How has encountering Jesus transformed your life?
3. What are some things that help you remember your encounter with Christ and remain focused on Him?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:22-30

John always kept the focus and attention on Jesus, not on himself. John's followers were concerned Jesus was growing in popularity, and that His popularity was actually costing John some of his own. John's response? "Good!" Building his own reputation, platform, and resume was all for naught; the only way to build something eternally valuable was to point others to Jesus.

1. What are some areas in which you struggle with being humble?
2. What are some symptoms of a life that is self-focused?
3. What are some characteristics of a life that is Christ-focused?

John the Baptist knew who He was and he was quite content with the person God made him to be. Because he rested confidently in who he was in God, John never needed to point to himself; he was content to point solely to Jesus.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

According to Jesus, John was the greatest man to ever be born, yet Jesus went on to say that even the least in the kingdom is greater than he. How does that work? John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He died on the other side of the cross. He baptized with water. But through Jesus, you can be baptized with the Spirit and with fire. John was a voice. Jesus is the eternal Word. John was the forerunner. Jesus is the King! Let's make much of Him!

1. How can you give Jesus the place of prominence He deserves in your life today?
2. What are some practical ways to live out: "He must increase, but I must decrease"?
3. What's one way you can choose to use your time that points others to Jesus?

PRAYER: Thank God for His presence and involvement in our lives. Commit to living lives focused on Him. Ask God to show us areas where we are lifting up ourselves when we should be lifting up Jesus.

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" {Matthew 11:11}

[Pastor Daniel spoke of the power of your personal Testimony. I have attached a worksheet on how to prepare your personal testimony. Consider having everyone take it home and put together their testimony. Schedule a weekly sharing of one testimony by each member. This will be powerful!, Martin 😊]

Your Personal Testimony Worksheet

Answer the following questions to help think through the three parts of your story about how you became a Christian. If this happened at an early age, your story can be presented from the perspective of when you began to experience significant growth in your Christian life by yielding your life to Christ. Remember, you're trying to find common ground with your non-Christian friends, so you need to be sensitive to them when you tell your story.

Part 1: Before: What was your life like before you received Christ? I lived and thought this way: (Here are some suggested thoughts and questions)

- Around what did your life revolve the most? What were my attitudes, needs and problems?
- How did those areas begin to disappoint me?
- How did you look for security, happiness and peace of mind? In what ways were my activities unsatisfying?

Part 2: How: How did you come to know or receive Christ? (Here some suggested thought questions)

- When did you first hear and understand the gospel? (When was I exposed to true Christianity? Mention the person who was involved in bringing you to Christ, a relative, pastor, Sunday School Teacher, radio, tv etc)
- What led to your decision to receive Christ? What were the final struggles that went through your mind just before you accepted Christ?
- How did you receive Christ (or what brought you to the point of yielding to Christ and how did you do that)? Was there a particular scripture that spoke to you at the time? Mention time, place and date if known.

Part 3: My life after I received Christ: (Here are some suggested thought questions)

- What specific changes do you see in your life (attitudes, actions and problems)? Use specific examples.
- Why am I motivated different now?
- What does Jesus Christ mean to you now?

Your Personal Testimony Worksheet (continued)

THREE DO's

Part 1: BEFORE

LINK your testimony to the conversation or a felt need with a good attention-getting sentence.

Example: "I can really identify with the concerns you're having with your teenager. Several years ago I found my whole life was filled with anxiety and frustration – just waiting for the other shoe to drop with my son."

Part 2: HOW YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN

Be CLEAR on how you came to Christ.

Example: "I was invited to attend a Bible study. It was over a period of several weeks that I began to understand how much God really loved me, and one night after the study, I invited Christ to come in to my life and forgive my sins."

Part 3: AFTER YOU RECEIVED CHRIST

Use SPECIFIC EXAMPLES to make your story real.

Example: "God began to give me a real peace in my life. I remember one night my son was more than an hour late. My normal feelings would have been fear and worry. But as I prayed, God calmed me and gave me His peace."

THREE DON'TS

Don't use Christian Jargon that non-Christians will not understand.

While terms such as “saved,” “lost,” “sanctified,” and “glorious” can be very meaningful to Christians, they do not communicate effectively to non-Christians.

Don't exaggerate.

Life is not always wonderful, fulfilling and without problems. People appreciate accuracy and realism.

Don't mention the names of denominations or church groups.

Statements such as “I attended the First Church before I became a Christian...” are not necessary. Keep your story positive and focus on what God is doing in your life.