



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: John 3:22-30 NET

Year 1: John the Witness, Jesus the Baptist

Bible Reading: John 3:22-30 NET

²² After this, Jesus & his disciples came into Judean territory, & there he spent time with them & was baptizing. ²³ John [the Baptist] was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, & people were coming to him & being baptized. ²⁴ (For John had not yet been thrown into prison.) ²⁵ Now a dispute came about between some of John's disciples & a certain Jew concerning ceremonial washing. ²⁶ So they came to John & said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River, about whom you testified—see, he is baptizing, & everyone is flocking to him!" (3:22-26 NET) ²⁷ John replied, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but rather, 'I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands by & listens for him, rejoices greatly when he hears the bridegroom's voice. This then is my joy, & it is complete. ³⁰ He must become more important while I become less important." (John 3:27-30 NET) "He must increase, but I must decrease." (3:30 CSB/ESV, etc.)

SUMMARY: The 4th Gospel depicts John & Jesus baptizing simultaneously—contradicting the other Gospels. Was Jesus really a Baptist? One solution notes that it's Jesus' earliest ministry—his 'Year of Obscurity'—which the Synoptics omit. In this period John isn't 'the Baptist,' he's 'John the Witness.' John's singular role is 'playing second fiddle' to Jesus—a task John embraces, playing it well & gladly. Let's ask the Lord: 'What's my role at this time?' John believed and confessed Jesus, succeeding where Nicodemus failed. John produced disciples; some turned out well (e.g. Andrew, etc.), others poorly. The latter envied Jesus' baptizing success; that's an 'earthly response.' When questioned,

John reiterated Jesus' superiority & his own subordinate status as Christ's 'best man,' declaring 'he must increase & I decrease.' Let's learn from John's exemplary example.

QUESTIONS:

1. Mark's Gospel suggests Jesus' public ministry did *not begin until after John the Baptist was imprisoned* ("Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee & proclaimed the gospel of God." Mark 1:14). In contrast, the 4th Gospel says *Jesus & John conducted baptismal ministries, simultaneously before John was arrested*. ("Jesus...was baptizing.²³ John was also baptizing...people were coming to him & being baptized.²⁴ (For John had not yet been thrown into prison.)" (Jn. 3:22-25). **Question:** How can this (apparent) contradiction be explained? Discuss.
2. Karoline Lewis says "For the 4th Evangelist *he is not 'John the Baptist,' but 'John the Witness.'*...He is never called 'the Baptist' in the 4th Gospel." Do you agree (or disagree) with this statement? Discuss.
 - a. How do we see John (the Baptist) as a 'witness' in the 4th Gospel?
 - b. Is John (the Baptist) the only 'witness' in the 4th Gospel? Who else is a 'witness'? How do they witness?
 - c. Are you (and I) called to be 'witnesses for Jesus' today? In what ways can we fulfill this role?
3. Concerning John's role during this period, Lamar Williamson says, "John *knows who he is...*He recognizes that he's *'playing 2nd fiddle' to Jesus, a part that he plays gladly & well.*"
 - a. How do you see this statement described/illustrated in the passage: Jn. 3:22-30?
 - b. What was John (the Baptist's) role before Jesus appeared on the scene?
4. John (the Baptist) was called (specifically) to be a witness for Jesus for that period; *how does this idea apply to you?*
 - a. Is there some specific role/function you feel the Lord asking you to fulfill presently?
 - b. Have you ever felt at a specific time/situation the Lord has a specific role He wants you to fulfill? [Share]
 - c. Have you ever felt that you've fulfilled a particular role & now the Lord has a different role for you? [Share]
5. John 3:36 says: "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him." (3:36). Now, let's focus on the verb tenses: "The one who *'is believing'* (present tense) in the Son *'is having'* (present tense) eternal life..." (3:36a)
 - a. What are the implications of the verb-tenses for our view of belief (faith) & eternal life (in the present &/or future)?
 - b. Is faith (belief) a 'one time' event—"I believed in Jesus; I prayed the 'sinner's prayer,' responded to an 'altar call'?"
 - c. Is 'eternal life' something we possess after we die? Or is it (can it be) our present personal possession now?