

John 1:19-34 (CSB) – ‘What’s your Story?’

19 This was John’s testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

20 He didn’t deny it but confessed: “I am not the Messiah.”

21 “What then?” they asked him. “Are you Elijah?”

“I am not,” he said.

“Are you the Prophet?”

“No,” he answered.

22 “Who are you, then?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?”

23 He said, “I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said.”

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 So they asked him, “Why then do you baptize if you aren’t the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?”

26 “I baptize with water,” John answered them. “Someone stands among you, but you don’t know him. 27 He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I’m not worthy to untie.” 28 All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The Lamb of God

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ 31 I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.” 32 And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. 33 I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Text Work –

19 This was John’s testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

20 He didn’t deny it but confessed: “I am not the Messiah.”

John knew exactly what they wanted to know because others had already been speculating about whether he was the Messiah, the Christ. He answered them

properly and carefully (notice it says “confessed”, twice in the ESV): “I am not the Messiah.”

For John, it was unthinkable that attention would focus on him, because he unequivocally not the Messiah, he knew that and he wanted to be clear that they knew that.

His job was to point to the Messiah, but we will get to that in a moment.

-Transition-

The questioning continued...

21 “What then?” they asked him. “Are you Elijah?”

A fair question, considering, he looked like Elijah, and he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, **AND** the Jews had an expectation that Elijah to come again. In fact, the final words of the Old Testament say Elijah will come again before the day of the Lord. But again John he is not!

“I am not,” he said.

Malachi 4:5–6

5 Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

-Transition-

The questioning continued... they would not relent.

“Are you the Prophet?”

They were thinking about the one God promised through Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15 and again in verse 18.

15 “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

But John said again, “No,”

He was very clear in each denial.

NO!

NO!

NO!

22 “Who are you, then?” they asked. “We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?”

Tell us John, who are you? What do you say about yourself? What’s your story?

Notice this -

John's answer in verses 23–28 reveals what is of primary importance in the matter of witnessing.

23 He said, "I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said."

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

26 "I baptize with water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. 27 He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie." 28 All this happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Lets break this down.

Look with me -

John says - **I am a voice**

He did not say, "I am the Word." He goes back about 700 years to the words given in Isaiah 40 verse 3-5 and said, "I am just a voice." He was not the substance, the content, or the flesh, as Tony spoke about last week -where John the author of this book, tells us that the Word became flesh, John the Baptist says I am not the flesh, **BUT** rather just the communicator. Borrowing the imagery from that Old Testament passage, he was saying, I am only a workman making a road, a path, a way for the Messiah. He moved the emphasis away from himself.

Isaiah 40:3-15

3 A voice of one crying out:

**Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness;
make a straight highway for our God in the desert.**

**4 Every valley will be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled;
the uneven ground will become smooth
and the rough places, a plain.**

**5 And the glory of the Lord will appear,
and all humanity together will see it,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.**

He does something similar in verse 27, where he says -

27 **He is the one coming after me, whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."**

He turns the conversation away from himself and points attention to Jesus, the one and only Messiah. Not only that, John says that Jesus is so above my league,

so highly exalted that ordinary people like himself were unworthy to perform a task relegated to the lowest slave. Let me explain ...

Among Rabbis and their disciples, there was a teacher-student relationship that had the potential for abuse. It was entirely possible that a Rabbi might expect unreasonable service from their disciples. One of the things which was considered "too low" for a Rabbi to expect from his disciples was the untying of the Rabbi's sandal strap. John says he is unworthy to do even this.

Who is this man of such HUMILITY?

A man that Jesus says in Matthew 11:11 –

11 **“Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared, but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

Jesus is basically saying of all who ever lived, including Moses, Abraham and David, John the Baptist was the G.O.A.T

Should we know more about John the Baptist, according to Jesus, the answer is YES!

The Scriptures are clear about John's faithfulness and commitment to God and His Kingdom.

We could conclude that John the Baptist was a Nazirite. The Nazirites were those who took a vow to voluntarily dedicate themselves to GOD. By definition, the Hebrew word *nazir*, simply means “to be separated, consecrated or devoted.” The Nazirite vow, appears in Numbers 6:1-21.

In accordance with that vow, John never cut his hair, he never touched a dead body, he never drank the fruit of the vine. He lived a pure, uncontaminated life.

But lets rewind a bit, because like Jesus says, John is no ordinary individual **(Luke 1)**

John's birth was a miraculous one. He was born of elderly parents (which is a nice way of saying OLD) who had never been able to have children **(Luke 1:7)**. The angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah, a Levitical priest, that he would have a son—news that Zechariah received with great disbelief, before we judge, remember they were OLD **(verses 8–18)**.

Gabriel said this about John –

- “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.
- He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb.
- He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.
- And he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a prepared people.” **(Verses 15–17)**

That's an amazing resume (CV) to have, before you are even born.

True to the word of the Lord, Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, gave birth to John. At the circumcision ceremony, Zechariah said about his son, “And you, child, will be called

a prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his ways, **(verse 76).**

John turned out to be a great man, and some. Mothers wanted their sons wanted to be like him, fathers wanted their daughters to marry him. If there was ever a man who had the temptation, especially as he saw Jesus' rising popularity, to exalt himself, John was that man. He could have talked about his miraculous birth or how it felt to live a solitary life of self-denial in the wilderness. He could built an empire on survival tactics for the wilderness **#beargylls** or perhaps his grasshopper diet. He could have discussed his devotional program or published a manual of discipline for those who wanted to follow God. He faced great temptation, but to his everlasting acclaim, he would have none of it. In fact he said later in John 3:30 speaking of Jesus and himself - "He must increase, but I must decrease."

A witness never imposes himself into the picture of the one of whom he is witnessing.

Let me say that in 2018 English, a witness never **photo bombs** himself into the picture of the one whom, he is witnessing.

John was an excellent witness.

This is the attitude we must strive for. I am nothing, you are nothing, but Jesus is everything! That was John's attitude, and it is the attitude of every authentic messenger of Christ.

Okay John, we get it. You are not the Messiah! You are not Elijah! You don't even see yourself as a prophet! (Though the pattern of your life suggests otherwise)

What's your story?

If John were here, he would say - 'Now we got that out the way, I am glad you asked'

Verse 29 -

29 **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

In one sentence we have the heart of the Christian message. Jesus is greeted with words that remind Him of his destiny. John's statement made it clear that Jesus would be a sacrifice for sin. The shadow of the cross was cast over the entire ministry of Jesus. God had provided the Lamb for humanity's deepest need! This too must become our message, the sacrificial death of Christ! Permit me to labour a little longer on this, as I believe it to be paramount to this text -

For those who profess Christ, as Lord & Saviour must acknowledge that our faith is covered in the blood —the blood of Christ cleanses us of all sin! This is why we sing -

**‘What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.**

- What can wash away my sin
Author: Robert Lowry (1876)

This reality must be primary in our witness and in our thinking!
Christ came to give abundant life - true.
Christ worked miracles - true, and he can still work miracles in our lives today.
But these are benefits of the Gospel, not the Gospel itself. The Gospel centers upon Christ who took on our sin - the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
We must not just know this; we must believe it. It must make its way from our heads to our hearts so that it might impact our entire lives.
The Lamb of God slain for you, and me, so that we might be reconciled to the Father and; then reconciled to one another. There is no other way!

30 **This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ 31 I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.”**

Now John was born before Jesus, we know this from Luke chapter 1. So, when John says **he existed before me**, he is indicating to the eternal pre-existence of Jesus. John knew very well that Jesus was God. (*Colossians 1:15-23*)

31 **I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.”**

John’s water baptisms were baptisms of repentance. That is how he prepared the way. People had to turn from their sins so that they might receive the Messiah and the benefits of His salvation. Jesus brought a new, different baptism.

32 **And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. 33 I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, “The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’**

John’s preaching motivated the human will to change: BUT Jesus’s message brought the power to change!
The power to change our lives—to leave our life of sin and enjoy the fullness of eternal life—comes only from a soaking or immersion in the Holy Spirit!
The word, baptize ‘baptizō’ in the Greek means to immerse, to cause to be engulfed or plunged into something. That something is Jesus Christ. We are to be immersed into Christ, engulfed with Jesus Christ, plunged into HIS rich and eternal GRACE.
Our lives should be centered in and around God, through Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is our witness; that should be our story.

HERE IS THE LAMB OF GOD...

BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD ...

LOOK, THE LAMB OF GOD ...

34 **I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."**

John the Baptist gives his firm testimony: **this is the Son of God."**

He is the Son of God revealed to us in John 1:18: the One who **perfectly** declares the nature and character of God the Father.