

## Jesus' Mentor

On Sunday, we continued our new sermon series called “Experiencing Jesus at a Deeper Level” by exploring the influence John the Baptist had on him.

1. Warm up question: Most of us have been shaped by key mentors in our life. Who has been your most impactful mentor? How did they impact you?
2. In Ephesians 2:7, the Bible tells us that Jesus existed in “the form of God” in heaven, but then “emptied himself” to come to earth as a human.
  - a. What do you understand that to mean? We talked a bit about this last week, but let’s briefly recap. Emptied himself of what?
  - b. When Jesus was a toddler, do you think he had any awareness of his special identity?
  - c. Jeff used young Clark Kent in the *Superman* movie as an example of how Jesus’ may have gradually come to realize who he was and what he was supposed to do. What do you think? When and how do you imagine Jesus coming to realize his special identity and mission? How do you imagine his understanding of God and faith coming together?
3. One of the key formative influences on Jesus was his cousin John the Baptist. John was sent to “prepare the way” for Jesus. Luke 3:4. John began his public ministry one to four years before Jesus launched his. John helped prepare the way by influencing the hearts of the people he preached to. But John also helped prepare the way by influencing Jesus through the impact of his preaching on Jesus and by creating a model of ministry Jesus could adapt and learn from. Through this, John became one of Jesus’ most important mentors.
  - a. John was eccentric. He preferred to live in the wilderness and “wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist; his food was locusts and wild honey.” Matthew 3:4. What do you think Jesus learned from John’s eccentricity?
  - b. John kept telling people that the Messiah was coming. “I’m not the one,” he said, “but there’s one coming after me whose sandals I’m not worthy to unfasten.” John 1:27. John told the people, “Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me.” John 1:26. Then one day John saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” In that moment, how do you think John’s words impacted Jesus?
  - c. Read Matthew 3:13-17. Eventually John baptized Jesus. Immediately thereafter Jesus retreated to the wilderness for 40 days, then launched his public ministry. To Jesus, what was the significance of his baptism?
4. Read Luke 3:1-9. You’d think John would have been glad so many were coming to him for baptism. But verses 7-9 tell us that he was upset with many of them. Why? Why was he so upset with them, and what did he want from them?
5. John had no interest in baptizing people who were simply looking for an easy religious ritual to make them feel better about themselves. He wanted to raise up people who would “bear fruits worthy of repentance.” In other words, he wanted people to live

ritual to make them feel better about themselves. He wanted to raise up people who would “bear fruits worthy of repentance.” In other words, he wanted people to live authentic lives of faith. In the verses that follow, John goes on to identify three key characteristics of an authentic life of faith. Read Luke 3:10-18.

- a. Verse 11 emphasizes the importance of **sharing** as a core spiritual value. Sharing can take many forms – we can share clothes, time, money, energy, faith, compliments, encouragement, joy, sorrow, knowledge, beautiful moments, etc. In what area of your life do you find it most difficult to share? How might you stretch yourself to achieve greater generosity in that area?
- b. Is it possible to share too much? How do we know when we are sharing enough?
- c. As a church community, we will be sponsoring a “local missions trip” to Dayspring to paint all the family apartments on March 2. In July, we will send a team on a missions trip to the Appalachian Mountains in Tennessee. In your view, is it important for our church to do things like that? Why or why not?

6. Luke 3:13 emphasizes the importance of **honesty** as a core spiritual value.

- a. Jeff said, “It sounds easy at first blush. But it’s hard to do. Telling the truth is one of the hardest things we’ll ever do.” Why is it so hard to be fully honest?
- b. When in your life have you witnessed (or engaged in) a courageous act of truth telling? What happened?
- c. Why is it so important to be deeply devoted to telling the truth? Why does God care, and why should we?

7. Luke 3:14 emphasizes the importance of **using power in ways that are just, gentle, and kind**. John exhorts soldiers – and by extension, all of us – to not use their power in oppressive ways.

- a. What is one of the worst abuses of power you’ve ever experienced? How did that affect you?
- b. All of us are in positions of power over others in various aspects of life. Name a place in your life where you have power over others. In that role, what does it look like for you to use your power in just, kind, and gentle ways?

8. Picture Jesus listening to John preach messages like the foregoing over a period of several years. How did God use that to prepare Jesus?