**Live in Community**



Small Group Study



**Volume Overview**

**Get Going**

[Jesus] said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” ([John 20:21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn20.21))

*The gift of the Holy Spirit was sent so that we might have power—power to go and make disciples. Some go to the farthest corners of the globe. Some only cross the street in front of their house. Still, God’s people always go. They go to work, school, grocery stores, kids’ soccer games, and family reunions. And wherever they go, they take their witness of Jesus with them. True believers live going and carrying out His mission.*

**Session Overview**

**Embrace Your Role**

**Biblical Encounter:** John the Baptist Points to Jesus ([John 1:19–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.19-34))

**Outcome:** Embrace your role in Jesus’ mission.

*In today’s session, we’ll see that we all have a part to play in the mission of Jesus. The Holy Spirit’s appearance confirmed to John the Baptist that Jesus was the Messiah. Because of John’s willingness to hear and obey God, he got to baptize Jesus in water! I think we can agree that’s a pretty special role. John the Baptist understood his part in Jesus’ mission. His job was to point to Jesus—not to be the Messiah. You and I have a part in Jesus’ mission as well. Jesus is telling us all to point others to Him in some way. Each of us has a unique purpose just as John did.*

|  |
| --- |
| *First time leading* Live *for Adults? Check out the* [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  When have you wished that you could switch roles with someone else? |

Sometimes we can be uncomfortable or dissatisfied with where we are in life. We might desire our boss’s job. Or perhaps we have an unfulfilled dream, wishing we had more or could do more. We often see our role as small and someone else’s as more important. That thinking is not a path that leads to fulfillment, but we often get caught by it anyway.

Why is it so hard to accept that we might be better suited for our current role rather than one we think is more meaningful? That’s not to say we shouldn’t want to grow or advance. But how often does the desire for what others have take us on unnecessary and costly detours away from where God wants to lead us? Learning to embrace our role is crucial to fulfilling it the way God wants us to.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: When have you felt like you found your place in God’s work?



|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  When have you felt like you found your place in God’s work? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

John the Baptist’s ministry mostly took place near the Jordan River in the east part of Israel. His message of repentance caught fire with people, and crowds quickly gathered.

But with an eye on any disruption to their power, the religious leaders in Jerusalem sent a group to ask John the Baptist who he was. John told them he wasn’t a prophet who had returned to the people of Israel. He also wasn’t the Messiah they longed for. He had been sent by God to point the way to the One that God was sending to save them. John clearly knew his role in Jesus’ mission. Let’s begin by looking at the last part of this encounter where John testified about who Jesus really was.

**Did You Know?**

|  |
| --- |
| In the New Testament period, ritual immersion in water (the predecessor to water baptism as we know it) was not an action to be completed only once. Instead, the ritual was repeated often, even daily, due to the commands in the Torah for purity. Although most Jews in the land of Israel did not enter the temple daily, the overarching mindset of the people was a desire to be ritually pure whenever possible. As a result, most Jewish settlements in the land of Israel had baptismal tanks, known as *mikvaot* (plural). And some of the wealthiest people had their very own *mikvah* (singular) inside their homes. What made John’s baptism unique was that it focused not only on ritual purity, but also included personal repentance. |

**God Spoke to John**

Read [John 1:32–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.32-34).

How did John the Baptist know he was supposed to point to the Messiah? His father, Zechariah, had been a priest. John would have been expected to follow in his father’s footsteps. But God had a different plan for John even before he was born.

As an adult, God directed John and he obeyed. He spent many years in the wilderness, separated from most of society. In that separation, God called him to share a message that many would accept, but powerful leaders would scorn. It wasn’t an easy assignment. It didn’t earn John money or fame in his own time. But he had a unique and important role in Jesus’ mission.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  If you had planned all your life to have a specific job or career, but God called you to a very different one, how do you think you would respond? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Like John the Baptist, how can we be prepared to respond to God’s leading through His Holy Spirit to do the unexpected in our own life? |

Now let’s look at what happened before John’s primary role in Jesus’ mission was fulfilled.

**John Chose to Stay the Course**

Read [John 1:19–28](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.19-28).

When the religious leaders came from Jerusalem to talk to John the Baptist, they doubted his message and authority. They were wary of his activity. So they came to investigate John’s message.

Then John had a choice: he could be intimidated by the questions of those who had earthly power or he could continue to obey the One who has all power. When we state it that way, the direction we should go seems obvious. But in real time, the decision is always more difficult. We may have external forces and voices questioning our purpose just as John did. These distractions attempt to discourage us from the mission of Jesus.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How do you think John managed to fulfill his mission despite being questioned by religious leaders? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How might John’s unbending response to the religious leaders have strengthened or weakened his message? How do you think it impacted the crowds he was preaching to? |

**John Declared Jesus as Savior**

Read [John 1:29–31](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.29-31).

When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River ([Matthew 3:13–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt3.13-17)), the moment was powerful for both of them. That experience strengthened John’s confidence and boldness to tell others about Jesus being the Savior. It was a message the religious leaders likely worried about.

Standing up to leaders put John’s life at risk, but he didn’t back down. This is the power of God’s voice at work. As He speaks to us through His Spirit and Word, we can declare Jesus with the boldness John did. When our hearts are truly changed, we become determined to speak up about what we believe. The message of Jesus must be shared no matter the risk or cost to us personally.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  John the Baptist’s powerful encounter with God surely sustained him in times of powerful opposition. How have your encounters with God done the same for you? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Like John, how can we proclaim the message of Jesus when those in power are opposed to us? |

**Reflect**

**Embrace your role in Jesus’ mission.**

Everyone has a role to play in the mission of Jesus. John the Baptist’s was unique, but so is our role. We can’t get distracted by the role others want us to play. The religious leaders’ questioning offered John an opportunity to claim to be someone God didn’t call him to be. Yet John remained faithful to his role.

We also can’t wish we had someone else’s role. John wasn’t jealous of Jesus and didn’t try to keep the crowds for himself. Instead, John wholeheartedly embraced the role God uniquely created him for.

Will we be able to accept the role God has for us in His mission, even when pressure mounts against us? What if our family wants something else for us? What if our boss or coworkers are uncomfortable with our message of Jesus and His love? The same God who transformed John and emboldened him is available to us as well. With His help, we can embrace our role in Jesus’ mission and make the impact He has planned for us.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How does John’s encounter with Jesus—and the life he lived in light of it—cause you to rethink how you’ve lived out Jesus’ impact on you? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What areas of your life need attention so you can boldly proclaim the message of Jesus and His salvation as John did? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How do you feel the Holy Spirit is leading you to embrace your role and proclaim the message of Jesus to those around you? |

**Activate**

We all have a part to play. The mission of Jesus is the greatest cause in history and you have a role! We don’t discover it by sitting back or watching from the stands. We have to get going and join the action. The same God who guided the life of John the Baptist still leads us today. How is He leading you?

**Challenge**

Find a way you can serve your church or community and share the love of Jesus. Are you interested in a certain area of ministry but hesitate to get involved? Step up and serve! Seek the Holy Spirit’s direction for your life. We *all* have a role to play. It might be singing on the worship team, serving in kids ministry, or cleaning up behind the scenes. But one thing is sure—the mission of Jesus needs *you!*

**Prayer Requests**

|  |
| --- |
| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

The message and mission of Jesus’ love is too important for us to stand back. Every one of us is uniquely gifted and called. No one else can serve Jesus like you or for you. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. Even if your next step is costly or risky, like John’s was, God’s Spirit is enough to help you overcome fears that might dissuade you. Personal devotions have been provided to help you explore this further and take the next steps.

**Live on Your Own**

|  |
| --- |
| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: John the Baptist Points to Jesus**

Read [John 1:19–34](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn1.19-34).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about embracing your role in His mission? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Don’t Compare Roles**

Read [John 21:18–22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn21.18-22).

Jesus delivered some difficult news to Peter about the cost of following Him: Peter would be martyred for his faith. Peter’s immediate response was to wonder about the fate of another disciple.

But not everyone’s faith journey ends the same. Some, like Peter’s, may end with the ultimate sacrifice. Another’s journey may end in peace. It’s not up to us to decide. Part of following Jesus faithfully is to truly turn over control to Him.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Why do you think Peter wanted to know if the other disciple would also be martyred for following Jesus? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How have you been tempted to compare your journey of following Jesus with that of someone else? How might this keep you from being fully obedient? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: The Inner Circle**

Read [Matthew 17:1–6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt17.1-6).

Only Peter, James, and John were asked to go to the top of the mountain with Jesus. Do you wonder what it must have been like for the remaining nine disciples who were left behind? Circumstances like these can be fertile ground for the sin of comparison and jealousy. It’s easy to look at what others have and let that impact our sense of self-worth.

*Why did those three get to go with Jesus? Why didn’t I get chosen?* We can imagine these questions bouncing around in the other disciples’ minds all too easily. Maybe that’s because we’d ask those same questions. In those moments, we need to remember we all have a part to play in Jesus’ mission. We may miss out on some moments, but that doesn’t mean our role isn’t valuable.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Why is comparison with others a dangerous habit for followers of Jesus? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What kinds of problems can arise in our life if we give in to the temptation to compare our role in Jesus’ mission to that of someone else? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What can you do to guard your heart against the sin of comparison and the discord it can bring within the family of God? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Waiting Tables**

Read [Acts 6:1–7](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac6.1-7).

The Early Church grew rapidly as many came to faith in Jesus. That growth created a logjam of sorts, and some people were feeling underserved. The apostles couldn’t handle their responsibilities and also manage the logistics of feeding certain members of the growing community. So, they chose people who could help to serve others by distributing food.

The people chosen for this role weren’t less than other leaders within God’s family. How do we know? Look no further than what the Bible says of Stephen. He was a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” The role we are called to doesn’t define our value to God. What matters to Him is our faithfulness and our humble attitude that serves others well. Being filled with Holy Spirit helps us with both of these qualities.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  John the Baptist’s role was to prepare the way for Jesus. Others preach, wait tables, and fill many other roles. Why is it so important that each of us discover where we fit within Jesus’ mission? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What steps can you take to further discover the gifts God has given you and find the place where you can serve Jesus most effectively? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Faithful to the End**

Read [Acts 7:54–60](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac7.54-60).

When we commit to follow God, we never know how He will use us. When Stephen was one of the people chosen to distribute food, it’s unlikely anyone would have guessed he would also be asked to give his life for Jesus as a martyr. No one predicted that he would preach a sermon that would become an entire chapter in the Bible and be read by billions of people for many centuries.

Like John the Baptist, our job is to be faithful where we are called. God has direction for each of us. Stephen was faithful to follow His direction. God will guide us as well.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How does Stephen’s story help you see the importance of being filled with the Spirit as you embrace your role in Jesus’ mission? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What are some practical ways you can make sure you are living in the power of God’s Spirit every day? |