

John the Baptist

“What then should we do?” the crowds asked John upon hearing his call to faith. Don’t rest on your spiritual lineage, but devote yourselves to living your faith in tangible ways. Helping people in your life to trust in Jesus means being present with God and them regularly.

Luke 3:1-18 (NRSV) In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”’ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’ And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’ In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’ Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’ Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.”

Reflections

Do you remember taking home your first girlfriend or boyfriend to meet your family? Such a venture can involve a mixture of emotions: excitement, anxiety, hope, dread, especially depending on how your family might respond. Would they accept your mate or embarrass you (and your mate)?

How did you show your family that you cared for this person? Did you introduce your family to your date? Did you talk with your date privately? How did you start conversations with your date and your family?

Taking faith home can be a similarly, mixed-emotions adventure. You may be interested in God, but you might not be so sure your family is. If they don’t know God, how do you introduce them to God? Do you have private conversations with God? How do you start conversations with your family and God?

A grandmother of a 4 year old shared her story on the Vibrant Faith webpage:

"I purchased the *Faith Talk with Children* packet for my grandson Hayden. (As my pastors at St. Luke’s know, Hayden is NOT a shy four year old.) Last evening I took Kristen and Hayden out for dinner for Kris’s birthday. As we left the house, I thought, ‘I think I’ll grab the *Faith Talk with Children* packet and take it along.’ When we arrived, the restaurant was quite full, so while we were sitting in our booth and waiting for dinner, I pulled out the packet for Hayden. Well, I must tell you that the next 45 minutes just flew by, and we had the most wonderful discussions with a four year old that you would never imagine. There were times we were all laughing so hard, and there were times that Hayden’s answers to his questions brought us to tears. When our dinner was being served, Hayden said, ‘This was the most wonderful and best game I ever

played!’ So....out of the mouth of babes! What a great way to create memories by just talking with your family in wonderful open discussion."

You can order a set of these cards from http://store.tyfi.org/prod-FaithTalk__FOUR_KEYS-97.aspx, or check out the entire store at <http://store.tyfi.org/>, or call Vibrant Faith at 877-239-2492. It might be one of the best \$30 you invested in your family.

Or, use the Readings on the other side of this handout to start faith conversations with others in your home. Go ahead! Share your devotion to God.

—Pastor Mike McQuaid

¹ http://vibrantfaith.org/transformation_stories.html.

Readings

Sunday, January 10

Luke 3:1-18

Today's Sunday School lessons will be about John the Baptist. Who is John the Baptist and what does he have to say about Jesus? What part of this message would you share with the children in your family. Think of creative ways to approach the topic. If you have children who attended Sunday School today, talk to them using the handout they bring home from class.

Monday, January 11

Colossians 3:16

How can you share thankful hearts and share spiritual songs with others, especially children in your life? What stands in the way of you sharing wisdom in this way? How will you change that?

Tuesday, January 12

Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs was originally written to share wisdom & guidance from one generation to the next. Peruse Proverbs and select a scripture to discuss with your household or with friends. Discuss how it applies to modern life. Proverbs is an excellent source for family devotion discussions with older children and teens.

Wednesday, January 13

Hebrews 10:19-25

1. "Tell about a time you tried to get out of attending a religious event (e.g., a church service, confirmation or youth group, family devotions)."
2. "Tell about an unforgettable religious service you attended."

(Questions are from 2 *FaithTalk*® — *Memories* cards)

Thursday, January 14

James 2:14-18

"Tell about a time when you could have helped someone and regret that you failed to do so." (From a *FaithTalk*® — *Actions* card) How might you plan now to be ready to help when you come across a similar situation in the future?

Friday, January 15

1 Peter 3:13-18

1. "What is one of the hardest questions you've been asked about what you believe? How did you respond?"
2. "If someone asked you what your faith means to you, what would be your response?"

(Questions are from 2 *FaithTalk*® — *Values* cards)

Saturday, January 16

Matthew 18:1-5

1. "What was a fear you had as a child? Why?"
2. "Tell of a time when a child inspired you."

(Questions are from 2 *FaithTalk*® — *Etchings* cards)

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.