

1. The Lamb of God

John 1:29–34

Daily Bible Meditations Jennifer Lewis-Berg

Sunday

Genesis 41:38–43

God placed Joseph at the center of His work in Egypt. Everything that had happened to Joseph clearly pointed to his being exactly where God, as well as all of mankind, needed him. Joseph was able to understand Pharaoh's deepest dreams and figure out what was best for Egypt. Pharaoh recognized the Spirit of God within Joseph. That same Spirit worked through Joseph on Pharaoh, encouraging him to trust Joseph and depend on him completely. We can recognize the Spirit in ourselves and others—a Spirit that is always at work. God's Spirit uses our relationships, the respect and connections we have with other believers, to place us right where He wants us.

Monday

Exodus 31:1–6

God was working with the Israelites to move them forward as His people. The tasks were enormous and the former slaves were not prepared to do the great work. The Spirit began to work through the talents and gifts that God had given the people. The Spirit of God was beginning to be associated with empowerment. God was developing in His people the ability to do His good work. The Spirit places wisdom and understanding within believers. Our talents and abilities are gifts from God. It is important to recognize that knowledge, abilities, and skills are not anything we crafted ourselves but come directly from our Heavenly Father through His Spirit.

Tuesday

Numbers 11:11–25

Moses' responsibilities were overwhelming. He begged God for some relief—even the relief of death. God heard Moses' plea. He instructed Moses to find seventy wise and responsible elders. God took some of the great power of His Spirit that He had poured out on Moses and gave it to these elders so that they could help with the work. God continued to empower His people. Today, God is at work everywhere and He appoints believers to help in the work. God knows our capabilities and, if we trust His Spirit, He will empower us and strengthen us with the wisdom to do what He wants us to do.

Wednesday

Numbers 11:26–30

Moses knew that great trust and understanding came with the indwelling of God's Spirit. He must have wished that everyone could

share not only the responsibilities of that gift, but the blessings and the honor that God had bestowed on him. Moses knew that only good could come from God's Spirit. The relationship that he had shared with God could have been such a blessing for everyone else. By asking the Spirit of God to reside within us, we will be blessed as well. God will not give us more than we can handle and we will be supported by the community of believers.

Thursday

John 1:19–23

From before his birth, John had been filled with the Spirit of God for one purpose: preparing the way for Jesus. Up to now, the way to God had been messy and crooked. The Jews had complicated their religion so much that it was difficult to see a Savior at the end of the "way." John spoke in clear and simple terms, revealing the Messiah to the children of Israel. Just as armies went ahead of a King to straighten out the route the King would follow, John emphasized all that had been said before about the coming of the Messiah. For us, the way to Jesus is still a straight line.

Friday

John 1:24–28

John baptized with water to symbolize the washing by the Spirit of God. It was a preparation and a clearing away of obstacles before Jesus Himself came. Baptism got people thinking about their readiness for God to show up. Jesus was actually going to arrive in their neighborhood. All the prophesying had led to this moment in time. John's baptizing was an actual physical occurrence that symbolized a spiritual one. For believers today, the sacrament of baptism represents the washing away of the old life and the birth of the new life in Christ. By participating in such a public act, we tell others that we are leaving our old selves beneath the water and coming out clean.

Sabbath

John 1:29–34

Even John the Baptist did not know that Jesus was the One. God revealed the outward sign of the Spirit as a dove. There had never been such tangible evidence of the Holy Spirit. The dove was a gentle confirmation that this was God's Son. As the dove descended from Heaven onto Jesus, God's Spirit dwelled in Jesus. Jesus had come down to earth to bring mankind the gift of the Holy Spirit. And because of that, believers continue to experience the sacred "passage" of baptism. Our own experience is far less dramatic, but no less significant. Christ came and lived among man to draw us closer to the Father. He left the Holy Spirit to remain and dwell within us.

Study	Background	Devotional
John 1:29-34	John 1:29-34	Joel 2:23-27

Key Verse

“I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

Heart of the Lesson

In a world of competing religious and political values, people are not always clear that one system is of any greater value than another is. How can Christians know which set of beliefs carries more weight than all others do? John testified that the baptism of the Holy Spirit surpasses water baptism and that the Spirit bears witness that Jesus is God’s Son.

Questions for Studying the Text

1. What do you think of when you hear the words “witness” or “testimony”? What expectations do we have of a witness? What was John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus? What value can we place in his testimony?
2. Discuss the “Lamb of God” imagery used by John. What does this picture help us to understand about Jesus and His ministry? How does the Old Testament symbolism of a sacrificial lamb fit with this (see Leviticus 1-5; Hebrews 10)? What does it mean that Jesus, “takes away the sin of the world” (v.29)?
3. Review Revelation 5:6-13; 7:17; 21:22-23; and 22:1-3. What does John’s later picture of a victorious, warrior Lamb at the end of time contribute to our further understanding of Jesus as the Lamb of God?
4. What emotions do you experience when observing the baptism of another? How did the baptism of John prepare the way for the revelation of Jesus (v.31)? Why did this event take place at the time of Jesus’ baptism?
5. What was the significance of the Spirit descending and remaining upon Jesus here (see Isaiah 11:2; 61:1)? In what ways did this represent a turning point in God’s presence with His people?

Understanding and Living

Norman Fearon

Baptism Like No Other

I have witnessed quite a few baptisms and have even had the privilege of performing a few of them myself. Each baptism service is unique, yet special. It is always a wonderful feeling to share in the joy and celebration that comes with a baptism. This feeling of joy is not about adding another member to the church rolls, but rather about being able to witness others making a public declaration that Jesus is Savior and Lord of their lives. Everyone who believes in Jesus and has been immersed is following the example of Jesus, seen in John 1:29-34 and the other Gospels (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3:21-22).

Although Jesus had no sins to repent from; had no need of salvation for Himself; or not even any personal need to be baptized, He submitted Himself to be baptized so that He set the stage for those who desire to follow Him. At one point it seems as though John wanted to change his mind about baptizing Jesus, sighting his unworthiness to be Jesus’ baptizer (Matthew 3:14). As soon as Jesus was baptized, there was an immediate approval from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17). There has never been

another baptism like this one, which confirms how truly special it was.

In John’s account of Jesus’ baptism, some of the details are different from that of the other accounts. John did not record the approval that came from heaven which occurred after Jesus’ baptism. However, he included details that none of the other writers included in their accounts. John seems to have focused more on giving an explanation rather than just telling about the events.

An Introduction of the Christ

According to Luke, other individuals came to John and were baptized (Luke 3:21). However, John did not make a special introduction for any of them in the way that he did for Jesus: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (v.29, NIV). This strongly suggests that this was not just another of those individuals who merely came to be baptized without the fruit of repentance (Luke 3:7-14). John’s announcement also suggested that Jesus was far superior to John and the other individuals who came to be baptized.

Jesus was introduced as the “Lamb of God” (v.29) or the Lamb chosen by God to take away the sin of the world.

Although regular sacrifice was made before the Son of God came to earth in the person of Jesus, the blood of those animals sacrificed could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:3-4). But Jesus, the perfect Lamb chosen by God, has defeated sin once and for all (Hebrews 7:27).

A Reason for His Mission

Although John the Baptist and Jesus were related (Luke 1:36), there is no indication that John was acquainted with Jesus. John said, "I myself did not know Him" (v. 31, NIV). John might not have been acquainted with Jesus but John was sent on a mission. He told his audience that the reason for his mission (baptizing with water) was with the intent of revealing the Christ to Israel (v.31). Israel already knew that the Christ would come to deliver them. I would imagine that they anxiously awaited His coming to drive the Romans out of their land once and for all. But how would they know Him without having someone to tell them who He was?

This was a part of the mission John was sent to accomplish—to reveal the Christ to Israel (v.31, NIV). It is always important that we remain with the task that God gives us and keep focus. John knew

that Jesus would show up for baptism. However, he was not aware of exactly when this would happen. So he ensured that he was in his position at all times and sure enough, one day, at a time unknown to him, Jesus showed up.

John's Testimony:

John's testimony served two purposes: First, his testimony provided his audience with the information on how he was able to identify the Christ. For him, identifying the Christ was not such a hard job. All he has to do was look out for the one upon whom the Spirit would come from heaven in the form of a dove and remain on Him (v.32). Thank God that the Spirit still plays a major role in our lives today. Without the Holy Spirit, we lack the ability to discern between the things that are true and the things that are not—especially in a time like this when there are so many impostors parading as genuine.

Second, John's testimony also provided proof that he was not acting on his own. He told his audience that his actions were in accordance with the thing he was told to do: "The one who sent me to baptize with water told me" (v. 33, NIV). Although everyone does not usually

have an identical experience, nevertheless every Christian should have a testimony. Having a testimony means that one knows something from a personal encounter. This is how the true witness is determined. This reminds me of the fact that salvation is about relationship—a personal relationship with God. This relationship is absolutely necessary for a successful Christian life. There is absolutely no doubt that John had a relationship with God. How else could he have known what he was supposed to do? How could he have known who the Christ was? Or how could he have given a testimony?

More than a Ritual

Baptism is seen by many as merely a ritual that qualifies an individual for church membership. However, there is much more to baptism than just a church membership. A person's baptism serves as a witness to the commitment he has made to devote his entire life to Christ. But have we been true to that commitment? We must remember that baptism may be a onetime event for us but it affects our lives forever. Therefore, we must ensure that we are faithful to that which we have promised—Jesus expects nothing less from us.

Hints for Teaching

Lesson Goals

1. Explore John's account of Jesus' baptism.
2. Relive emotions felt while observing or participating in a baptism.
3. Assess how Christians live out their baptismal covenant.

Teaching Activity

Have participants share their baptism experiences and the emotions they have felt when being baptized or observing another's baptism. What symbolism is presented in the act of baptism. As a group, come up with a definition of "baptismal covenant" and discuss the following questions: What promises does one make at baptism? What promises does God make to the one being baptized? What does it mean to be faithful to that covenant?

Looking Forward

Having considered the importance of the presence of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism, we turn next to Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to help His followers.