

The Gathering Growth Guide

John the Baptist Week 2 // Making a way for Jesus

Paul Jenkins

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Matthew 11:2-11

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Sometimes, the best analogies are the simplest ones, and this week, Paul shared a beautiful analogy for the mission of John the Baptist. He was called to prepare the way for Jesus and to make the paths straight for him (Matthew 3:3), and that means that John the Baptist was Jesus' fallback. Just like the many unsung men who are unknown because they spent their careers blocking for more famous teammates (I mean, really, have you ever heard of Roland Harper?), we are called like John the Baptist to make a way for Jesus. To do that, we'll have to do the same three things that John the Baptist did:

1. **John had to go first.** Everybody wants to be the trendsetter or the trail blazer or the explorer discovering new lands until they realize the risks involved in going first. This weekend our country is honoring veterans who spent their careers going first into battle so that others could live in freedom. The first wave on the beaches of D-Day had 3 times the casualties as the next wave, and so if we're going to make a way for Jesus, we've got to hit the hole first not matter what it costs. According to Matthew 16:24-25, it might cost us everything – including our lives.
2. **John had to go hard.** Fallbacks don't tiptoe into the hole to block for the running backs behind them. They explode into the hole! Jesus said that John was moving forward by force (Matthew 11:12). David ran towards Goliath. Colossians 4:12 compares prayer to wrestling. Being the fallback for Jesus isn't for pansies. This is for people with thick skin and tough knees.
3. **John had to go away.** And when it was all said and done, after John had gone first and gone hard, he found himself in prison doubting. In Matthew 11:2-3, John sent his disciples to find out if Jesus really was the One he should have prepared the way for, and Jesus answered by telling John all that was happening because of John's sacrifice: the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the gospel is preached. In other words, Jesus told John, "We win." When we're willing to get out of the way (John 3:30 says to decrease so Jesus can increase), we'll see the kingdom of God win, too.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- When you think of going first, what emotions do you experience? Does the thought of being first excite you or scare you?
- Fallbacks block opposing players so that someone else can score the touchdown and get the fame. Discuss the pros and cons of playing that role on a team.
- Looking back over your notes from the past week, was there anything that confused you or really caught your attention?
- We will never willingly suffer personal loss until we see Jesus as worth it. Read Philippians 3:7-11 and discuss how Paul redefined winning?
- Fallbacks train themselves to be bigger and stronger than their opponents because they know that a collision is inevitable! Read John 15:18-27 and discuss whether or not a spiritual collision is inevitable. Why did Jesus tell his disciples (and us) this? Read John 16:1 for the answer. How can we best prepare ourselves for the inevitable collision as we make the way for Jesus?