

## **A Light Pointer John 1:6-9, 3:22-36 12/14/03**

I want to invite you to be armchair psychologist this morning. I am going to read you a brief case file and ask you to draw your own conclusions about the impact of certain events in this persons case file.

1. He was an only child born to parents who had pretty well given up on ever having children. We do not know the exact age of his parents but we do know they were well along in years.
2. Mom and Dad were raised in a culture that was pretty closed and very well defined. Religion was especially important to them and the general evaluation was that they were extremely godly. In fact the inability to have a child was generally viewed as a punishment by God for sin and disobedience.
3. His mother's pregnancy was viewed as a special act of God and his Dad has some emotional traumas associated with his conception, birth and naming.
4. While carrying him to term his mother had an encounter with a much younger cousin, who was also pregnant, but under very different circumstances. While hosting this cousin his mother made it abundantly clear that her child would never measure up to the stature of the child her cousin would eventually bear.
5. At his circumcision his father gave him a name that was not part of their family line, a very unusual decision and one that his community reacted in great surprise to. Regaining his voice his father has an ecstatic religious experience and begins to do what his people call prophesying. But what his dad first does is to declare the importance of the cousin's child yet to be born and then only after that does he say anything about his birth.
6. He would be raised in a home where certain food, beverages, and cosmetic norms would be not only ignored but also forbidden for him that would cause him to stand out in the midst of his peers.
7. As a young adult he left his parents and moved out into the desert until he began to fulfill the destiny his parents had told him was a call from God.

Now, you don't have to be a fan of Oprah or Dr. Phil to conclude that this young man would possess a basketful of issues. I mean, pick almost any one of the circumstances I have just enumerated and you would be well within the realm of either deep psychological scars, relational trauma or anti social behaviors. In fact many would say his moving out into the desert should not have come as a surprise to anyone.

Well, I am sure you all know of whom I am speaking. The son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. And the story is told in two very different ways by Luke and by the Apostle John. And yet, despite all of the unusual circumstances related to his birth, John seemed to have no difficulty coming to grips, accepting and living out God's purposes for his life. His call in life was to be one who would point

to the light of the world Jesus. And we see and hear again and again that this role, this focus rather than cause undue trauma was entered into with all of his vim and vigor. No one could ever accuse John the Baptizer of being a slouch, of taking the easy road, of avoiding his destiny and the plan that God has laid out for him. Of all the texts that declare this most clearly it is further on in John's Gospel that we see the degree to which he gladly accepted the role God had give to always point toward another one. It is found in John chapter 3. A section that immediately brings to mind the wonderful 16<sup>th</sup> verse which declares the giving love of God but look a bit further to the paragraph beginning at verse 22. Identified in my Bible as "John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus. Picture the scene. Jesus had taken his disciples into the Judean countryside where he was now baptizing followers. At the same time John the Baptizer has gone to a place where there was a lot of water to baptize. While there someone comes and starts an argument with some of John's disciples who then go to John. Verse 26 *"Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."* I often wonder at the motives behind his disciples. My guess they were like most of us. There was some sense of importance because they were around a guy to whom everyone was flocking. Though they were not center stage, they were right next to it and now they feel threatened. Their ministry was beginning to have declining numbers and you know what that means? It might affect their job security. Now, the text doesn't tell us this but I do not believe that it is a stretch of the imagination to figure out what was going on here because human nature has not changed over the centuries of time. Now, lets look at 27 and lets read it together out loud. *To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must **become greater**; I must become less.* Every time I read this

I get chills up my back. John knew exactly what you and I struggle to accept regularly. **“It is not about us. It is about Him”**. That is what John is saying to his disciples. You guys have missed the point. Verse 28 you guys heard me say again and again from the very beginning that I am the attendant at the wedding. Not the bride. I exist to serve him not the other way around. I am the pointer, he is the light.

It seems every year that becomes more and more difficult to do. I am not speaking of keeping Christ in Christmas. I am not referring to the increased pressure to consume more and more this time of year. I am speaking of the ever-increasing cry that comes from deep within my heart. Joel it is all about you. Joel, all of life must be viewed through the grid of what does it mean for you. Each morning when I open my Internet to my msn page I am accosted by a plethora of articles that desire to interpret everything that has happened in terms of how it impacts me. Whether it is the market numbers, the availability of the flu vaccine, or the latest in styles. And everywhere I turn I hear “let me tell you how this impacts you” for the message of my culture is “it is all about you.” And dear ones. I mean that. Too often we pick up this book of truth and we read it with the same grid. What can you do for me God? What have you done for me lately? And to pick up and put in place a new grid is perhaps the hardest thing in the world to do. We are bucking every force in our world. And even in the church. Check out the bestseller list of Christian books. Almost without exception spiritual self help books. How you can get God to come through for you.

Oh God help us to have different eyes. To see that it is all about our Savior and Lord. To him alone belongs the glory and honor and majesty. And so this week let me ask you to do this one thing. To every day at the first of the hour say out loud. My Jesus, my Savior, my Lord may I in the next 60 minutes remember again that it is all about you. And give me your eyes that I might view my circumstances, relationships and decisions from that same perspective. Amen.