

Icebreaker:

John the Baptist's (JTB) disciples may have been discussing/arguing about baptism in verse 25. What subjects do you avoid to keep from arguing (religion, money, politics, etc.)?

1. We see disciples following both JTB and Jesus. JTB was charismatic and fascinating (preaching repentance, eating locusts and honey) while Jesus was spectacular (turning water into wine). Do people today follow (or even worship) celebrities, sports stars or politicians? What is it that makes us want to follow (worship) others?
2. John's disciples are probably comparing themselves to Jesus' disciples (verses 25-26). It's been said that living a life of comparison is crippling. In what ways do you compare yourself with others and how has that affected you?
3. John the Baptist had a thriving ministry and now it seemed to his disciples that someone else's ministry was going to begin to thrive. This change was difficult for them (as it is for most of us). In what ways do you see ministry (at ZPC or elsewhere) changing and how readily do you accept that change?
4. Dale Bruner says that, "The best antidote to envy is the conviction of the sovereignty of God." What does that mean to you and do you agree with his statement?
5. Read John 3:27-29 in The Message. (You can find The Message on your smartphone or at Bible Gateway on your computer.) How does reading this version make you think differently about JTB as he restates his role?
6. Read verse 30 aloud one time. Take 3 minutes to meditate on it and what it means. Then share: How can you apply verse 30 in your own life?

prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Adrienne Bough, Theresa Beardsley, Amy Lynelle, Joe Mundil, and Ambur Pipkin (daughter of Noah's Ark Director Sherry Pipkin).
- > Prayers of comfort for Carol Milli and family in the death of her husband Harry.

It is easy for us to play the comparison game or feel nervous about change. John's disciples may have been uneasy about change ("all" of John the Baptist's disciples were going over to Jesus). They may have been jealous too. Yet, John and Jesus provide wonderful humble examples of leadership and how to handle the situation. John is humble and happy for Jesus. He wants to decrease so Jesus can increase – wow! Jesus always seems to keep his mission in mind, and not worry about whether or not people like him. May we learn to deal with change and comparison with humility and staying focused on what's important.

1. In the context of the times, it was normal for a rabbi to have disciples follow them and learn from them about all aspects of life. That is not common today. But today, Americans often struggle with hero-worship, whether it be celebrities or politicians. We want someone to follow. Yet, we still need to remember who we are in Christ and that God made each of us unique and gifted.
2. John's disciples are worried that everyone is going over to Jesus. They may be threatened or think something is wrong. Comparing ourselves to others almost always backfires. If we're "better" than the other person, our egos can get inflated. If we're "worse" than the other person, it can lead to anxiety, doubts, even depression. Continue to turn your hearts back to Jesus and look to him for your identity and work at not comparing yourselves to others, good or bad.
3. Change is almost always hard, even good change. As times change, our culture changes. Views on music, what we wear to church, gender identity and marriage, and even how we use our buildings are changing. Encourage people to share openly on this question.
4. John's disciples were almost surely envious of Jesus's disciples. Bruner's quote might mean that if we are envious, we should focus on God's sovereignty. God is in control and things in the end (even if not until the very end of time!) will work out for good for God's plan. God wins and will bring about justice, peace, and His Kingdom.
5. The Message is a contemporary paraphrase of the Bible written by Eugene Peterson. It is accepted as a way to look at the Bible in very modern language. The Message shows JTB being "genuinely happy" to serve alongside Jesus as the "Best Man" at the wedding of Jesus and the Church.
6. Verse 30 is short and profound. It is a great example of how John's gospel is unique. Three minutes is a long time to meditate – but try it! By doing some of these meditations or different ways to ask questions, our goal is to stretch your group and hopefully go deeper into the meaning of the Bible, and how it applies to you.