

Neighborhood Life Group Guide

Matthew 3:1-17
Pastor Mike Bickley
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Prayer: Pray for God to bless new Adopt-A-School partnerships this year between our church's neighborhood life groups and the Olathe public schools.

Read: Take a few minutes to read and mark up the following passage on your own.

Matthew 3:1-17

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"

⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸ Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Discussion Questions

1. After reading Matthew 3:1-17, share some observations from the verses you've just read.

2. What from this week's sermon impacted you?

3. Matthew 3:3 says that John the Baptist is the voice crying: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."

- Looking through Matthew 3, what ways was God using John the Baptist to prepare people for the Messiah?

4. John the Baptist warns the Pharisees and Sadducees saying: "Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10), and "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

- What can we learn from John the Baptist about God's judgement and grace in these two statements?
- Where does "good fruit" in person's life come from?
- Why does John the Baptist say God will burn away all the "chaff"?
- Take a moment to examine your heart. If you're a follower of Jesus, where is one place that you see God producing good fruit in your life?

5. Look at Matthew 3:11. How is John's baptism of repentance different than the kind of baptism that Jesus brings into the world?

6. Why would John rightly tell Jesus: "I need to be baptized by you" (Matthew 3:14).

7. How do you see the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit) present in Jesus' unique baptism in Matthew 3:13-17?

8. What is one encouragement or conviction that you'll take away from Matthew 3?

Personal Reflection: Take a few minutes to reflect upon how you have been living out your faith for Jesus Christ this past week.

- ❖ **Word:** Have I read God's Word every day this week? What has God been teaching me?

- ❖ **Prayer:** Have I prayed to God every day this week? What have I prayed for?

- ❖ **Fellowship:** Have I gathered with other believers for fellowship and worship this week? How have I encouraged other Christians? How are other Christians encouraging me?

- ❖ **Confession:** Where am I struggling with sin, temptation, doubt, or hardship? Is there someone I need to seek forgiveness from? Is there someone I need to forgive?

- ❖ **Praise:** How have I seen God at work this week? What fruit have I seen in other people's lives?

- ❖ **Mission:** How have I been on mission this week? Who needs to hear the Gospel? Who can I invite to church? Who can I encourage or pray for this week?

Prayer: After you've spent some time in personal reflection, share one prayer request – a praise, a need, a confession, etc. Write down your group's prayer requests and commit to praying for them this week.