

## WHAT MUST A MINISTER DO?

**1** <sup>6</sup>There came a man, sent by God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, so that he might bear testimony about the Light, so that all men might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the Light; on the contrary, he came so that he might bear testimony about the Light ...

<sup>19</sup>Now this was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, Who are you? <sup>20</sup>He admitted and did not deny; indeed, he admitted, I am not the Christ. <sup>21</sup>So they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? And he replied, I am not. Are you the Prophet? And he answered, No. <sup>22</sup>Therefore they said to him, Who are you? [Tell us,] so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself? <sup>23</sup>He said, I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make the way straight for the LORD, just as Isaiah the prophet foretold. <sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent by the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>Then they asked him and demanded of him, Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet? <sup>26</sup>John answered them by saying, I am baptizing with water; [but] among you stands someone whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>[namely,] the one who comes after me. I am not worthy to untie the thongs of his sandals. <sup>28</sup>These things occurred in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan [River], where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup>The next day [John] saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, After me there comes a man who surpasses me; because he was before me. <sup>31</sup>I did not know who he was; but this reason I came baptizing with water is so that he might be revealed to Israel. <sup>32</sup>Then John testified, I have seen the [Holy] Spirit descending out of heaven like a dove; and he remained on him. <sup>33</sup>I did not know who he was; but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, Upon whomever you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. <sup>34</sup>I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

<sup>35</sup>The next day John was again standing with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup>He looked at Jesus as he passed by, and said, Look, the Lamb of God! <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say [this], and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Jesus turned and saw them following. He said to them, What do you want? They said to him, Rabbi, (which, being translated, means, Teacher), where are you staying? <sup>39</sup>He said to them, Come, and you shall see. So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day; it was about the tenth hour [of the day]. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John [speak] and who followed [Jesus], was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>The first thing he did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, We have found the Messiah, (which, being translated, means, the Christ). <sup>42</sup>He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas, (which, when translated, means, Peter). (Jn. 1:6-8, 19-42)

### **Introduction**

Whenever you start a new job it is always good to have a clear understanding of what is expected of you. Whatever job you take, you will always have a job description.

What about ministers? Has God provided a job description for ministers? Yes He has. The first chapter of the Gospel of John provides valuable guidelines to be followed if a minister would be faithful to God in his ministry.

What is the minister's divine job description? How can he know if he is being faithful to God? To know and be faithful to his divine calling, a minister should consult the description of John the Baptist, this man who is described as "*a man sent by God.*" If he would be faithful to God, a minister should imitate the characteristics of John the Baptist, a man sent by God; and the congregation should pray for their minister and encourage him and exhort him to fulfill this divine job description revealed through the person and ministry of John the Baptist.

### **I. A Minister Must Point Men to Jesus**

According to verse 7, a man sent by God is called to bear witness to "*the Light.*" His task is to point men to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note that the man of God is called to bear witness to "*the Light*" with the intent that men might believe in Christ through his witness: "*[John] came as a witness, so that he might bear testimony about the Light, so that all men might believe through him.*" The man sent by God, the man who would be faithful to the calling given him by God, must not act like "a museum tour guide"—one who merely describes great works of beauty or ancient artifacts that have little bearing on our life. Likewise, the minister must not present the truth of Christ in a way that makes it appear that it is confined to the ancient past with no bearing and impact upon the lives of his hearers. On the contrary, the man sent by God may better be compared to "a mountain trail guide"—a mountain trail guide compels us to follow him as he points us to the way of safety and life. The man of God lovingly and earnestly presents to the unconverted the message: "Sinner, you are lost! You are perishing in your sins! Here is the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, you need Him. He is your only hope. Come to Him, entrust yourself to Him, trust Him and follow Him." The message he brings to the Christian: "Keep on the trail of spiritual life! Don't stop, don't turn back, don't get sidetracked! Refresh yourself in Christ! Follow Him all the way to your heavenly home!" A man sent by God presents Jesus to his hearers, and he does so in such a way that the hearers must respond to Jesus, they must deal with Jesus, they cannot simply ignore Him.

In verse 29 we see this man sent by God in action, we hear him proclaiming his God-given message: "*Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" He deals with universal and eternal issues; he does not identify Jesus as merely a Jewish liberator, but as the Savior for the world. When people say they want "relevant messages," what they usually mean is that they want their own self-centered concerns addressed, and addressed in such a manner that their private world is fashioned into a personal haven of comfort and security, as well as being given the prescription for success and happiness in this present world. But what could possibly be more relevant than to bring men into the presence of God? The Christian thinker and writer, C. S. Lewis, commented, "Everything that is not

eternal is eternally out of date.” What can be more relevant than to address the great issues of eternity? What can be more relevant than to relate our life and concerns to the life and purposes of God? This is what the man sent by God is called to do. The man sent by God does not deal with men in a superficial manner, he compels them to come to grips with the realities of sin, guilt, judgment, and he points them to our only hope: Jesus Christ and His cross.

What is one blessed result of such a witness? Men are pointed to Jesus Christ; Jesus becomes the focal point (vs. 35-36.) Men seek Christ; their attention has been focused on Christ and they become interested in becoming acquainted with Him (vs. 37.) As men seek out Christ they come to have a personal encounter with Him (vs. 38-39.) Such men come to commit themselves to Christ (vs. 39.) Then, these men point other men to Christ; they share with others their discovery (“*We have found the Messiah!*”) and they bring others directly to Christ (vs. 40-42.) We must note that the outline of verses 35-42 is one blessed result of proclaiming Christ, but it is not necessarily a universal result, nor the only result. The Pharisees rejected John’s message, King Herod opposed John and had him imprisoned.

The first thing to grasp from the description of John the Baptist and his ministry is the fact that a man sent by God, if he would be true to his divine calling, must point men to Jesus.

## II. A Minister Must Always Exalt Jesus

A man sent by God knows his identity and his calling, and he does not misunderstand his mission nor misinterpret that mission to others. John the Baptist acknowledged that he himself was not the Light; he was called to bear witness to the Light (vs. 8.) According to Luke 1:15, John would “*be great in the sight of the LORD,*” because he would turn many of the children of Israel to the LORD their God (Lk. 1:16), he would make “*ready for the LORD a people prepared for him*” (Lk. 1:17b.)

John truthfully asserts, “*I am not the Christ*” (vs. 19-20.) He points men away from himself. He does not claim to be the Messiah, he does not claim to be able to personally save men and solve their problems, he does not encourage men to set their hopes upon him and exalt him—he faithfully points men to Jesus Christ. The world loves to look to men, and men love to think that they can save the world:

Alfred Noble sold his invention of dynamite to the makers of arms, convinced that its terrible deterrent value would make war impossible. It didn’t. Hiram Maxim, the inventor of the machine gun, thought he had helped to end war between civilized nations. “Only a general who was a barbarian,” he said, “would send his men to certain death against the concentrated power of my new gun.” But they did. The first apostles of the submarine said it would bring battle to a stoppage altogether. It didn’t. Then came the invention of the

airplane. The Wright Brothers were convinced they had given the world the decisive deterrent. Said Orville Wright, “We thought we were introducing an invention that would make further war practically impossible.” General Billy Mitchell saw it more accurately. “In the next war,” he said, “God will be on the side of the heaviest Air Force.” (Bill Moyers’ commentary for CBS radio)

In contrast to the men of the world and their false hopes of saving the world, the man sent by God points to Jesus Christ, and declares, *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*

John the Baptist goes on to identify himself as *“the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make the way straight for the LORD”* (vs. 23.) Here is a deep and genuine humility. John declares, “I am not the Messiah. I am not the great prophet. I am only a voice.” But there is also a deep and genuine certainty of being commissioned by God and bearing a message from God: “I myself am only the voice, but mine is the voice that has a message for you from God”—John recognizes himself to be the fulfillment of the prophecy proclaimed by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Consider the testimony of Jesus concerning John the Baptist:

*As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>8</sup>If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. <sup>9</sup>Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>This is the one about whom it is written: I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. (Matt. 11:7-10)*

John was not *“a reed swayed by the wind”*—one who vacillates with the popular currents of the day and seeks to win men’s approval by proclaiming what they want to hear. John was not *“a man dressed in fine clothes”*—one who fashions his message so as to be acceptable to the ruling authorities whoever they may be, so that he may gain a comfortable position for himself in the places of wealth and power. What drew the crowds to respect John and flock to hear his message was the fact that he was a prophet of God, a man sent by God who spoke the Word of God. A man sent from God speaks with true conviction and authority, because he makes it his aim to faithfully speak and apply the Word of God—note also the commentary of the angel concerning John recorded in Luke 1:15b, *“he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

A man sent by God—being aware of his own identity and purpose—will exhibit a deep reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the Lord Jesus follows him chronologically, appearing on the scene of history after John, John acknowledges that Jesus must be exalted above him, because Jesus is the One who is pre-eminent (vs. 15.) John professes that he is unworthy to unloose the thongs of Jesus’ sandals—John is declaring that he is unworthy to even be so much as Jesus’

servant, he is not even worthy to serve in the capacity of the most menial servant (vs. 27.) A man sent by God has a deep awareness of who Jesus Christ is, and he communicates this awareness by the way he speaks of Christ and the way he speaks for Christ.

A man sent by God—being aware of his identity and purpose—will intentionally point men away from himself to Christ (vs. 35-37.) John makes every effort and takes every opportunity to point men to Christ (vs. 35-36.) His purpose is to have men sever their allegiance to him and give their allegiance to Christ (vs. 37)—note the testimony of John recorded in John 3:26-27a, 30, *“They came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one of whom you testified—he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.’<sup>27</sup>To this John replied ...<sup>30</sup>‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’”*

The man sent by God does not cultivate a personal following, he does not jealously build up his own church, and he does not condone others seeking to exalt him personally and his ministry for his own sake. Note this self-humbling, Christ-exalting attribute in the ministry of the Apostle Paul:

*Now this is what I mean, each one of you is saying, I follow Paul; or I am for Apollos; or I am for Cephas; or I follow Christ. <sup>13</sup>Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:12-13)*

*What then is Apollos? Or what is Paul? Ministers through whom you believed—as the LORD has assigned to each his task. (1 Cori. 3:5)*

The second thing to grasp from the description of John the Baptist and his ministry is the fact that a man sent by God, if he would be true to his divine calling, must always exalt Jesus.

### **III. A Minister Must Depend upon God**

In verses 30-34 John the Baptist confesses his dependence upon God. John acknowledges that he was sent to prepare the way for the Savior; he further acknowledges that he himself did not know the identity of that Savior. John had to rely upon God the Father to point out to him His Son so that he might fulfill his ministry of presenting Him to Israel and pointing men to Him.

In contrast to John’s testimony, there is the confession of a pastor who acknowledged the spiritual immaturity of his early days of ministry. In his first pastorate a lady approached him, assuring him that she was praying for him. He confesses that his unspoken response was, “Why is she praying for me? Doesn’t she know that I have a seminary education?” If he had truly been educated in the things of God, he would have solicited many more people to pray for him!

A man sent by God recognizes his dependence upon God; and this recognition makes him a man of prayer. The pre-eminent Man from God, the Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, was pre-eminently a man of prayer. We read of Him in Mark 1:35, *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”* Consider the heartfelt appeal of the Apostle Paul: *“Brothers, pray for us”* (1 Thess. 5:25.) Consider the testimony of the outstanding nineteenth-century British preacher, Charles Spurgeon:

When I came to New Park Street Chapel, it was but a mere handful of people to whom I first preached; yet I can never forget how earnestly they prayed ... I always give all the glory to God, but I do not forget that He gave me the privilege of ministering from the first to a praying people. (*C.H. Spurgeon*, Vol. 1, *The Banner of Truth Trust*, P.O. Box 621 Carlisle PA, p.263)

The third thing to grasp from the description of John the Baptist and his ministry is the fact that a man sent by God, if he would be true to his divine calling, must be a man who depends upon God.

## **Conclusion**

The LORD has provided His divine job description for ministers through the example of John the Baptist, that man sent by God. By the grace of God, ministers, if they would be true men of God, must seek to imitate the example provided for them by John the Baptist. And congregations should pray for their minister, and exhort and encourage him to be faithful to that job description, and thereby truly be a man sent by God.