

## Discussion Questions:

Overall strategy: The fourth gospel teaches repeatedly that faith in Jesus arises through the testimony of believers. John the Baptist provides the first testimony and launches the telling and re-telling about Jesus that has continued to this day. (John 1.35-51) The point of studying John the Baptist is to bring to clarity the critical role of witness bearing to the mission of the church and every believer.

1. Upon reading the entire first chapter, especially starting at vs. 19, attempt to summarize in one sentence what the gospel writer wants us to know about John the Baptist's importance.
2. Does the text give any clue that accounts for why John the Baptist is so attractive? Why are the priests and Levites interested in him?
3. In the gospel according to John only one person comes to faith through direct conversation with Jesus—Philip (John 1.43). All others are dependent on the testimony of others. It is John the Baptist that is the first to give testimony to Jesus. What are we learning here about our own role in fostering faith in our world?
4. Some scholars believe that the gospel writer's courtroom language (witness, confession, interrogation, testimony) found throughout the fourth gospel indicates that a great trial is going on. Do you find this idea compelling? If so, who is being tried? Who are the witnesses? The Jury? The Judge? Is such a trial under way in our own time?
5. Why did Jesus need a forerunner? What purpose do you think is served by the witness of John the Baptist?
6. Is there anyone that you're acquainted with who compares to John the Baptist? Who are the forerunners in our time? Who are the witnesses? Who recognizes and points out Jesus?
7. How distinct or obvious was Jesus' specialness? Could people perceive it without a "witness?"
8. How distinct or obvious is Jesus' specialness today?
9. Was there any advantage for the people who lived when Jesus had his earthly ministry? Was actually seeing Jesus a benefit to faith?

10. Who has served as a witness for you? Who has enabled you to perceive the specialness of Jesus?