

**THE BIG IDEA:** Like John, each of us has a unique role in a common goal.

### The Take-Off

Umm, has anyone noticed that beards are big? Thank you, Duck Dynasty! (image)

But beards are bigger than one tv show, right? In fact, there are national and international beard and mustache competitions, and yesterday was the 2013 World Beard and Mustache Championships, and it included some of these guys who competed in the National Championships just a couple of months ago (images)

Now - thanks to a phenomenon called "No Shave November" - beards have really started to grow (ugggh) in popularity as men (and some women) all over the world will put down their razors for a month and let nature take over.

Maybe you've heard of No Shave November (or maybe you haven't and you're pretty sure I'm going off the deep end) and the original movement that it (one more bad pun) grew from, but if you haven't, NSS came from "Movember" which started in Australia in 2004

That's when a group of 30 men got together to grow mustaches for 30 days in order to raise awareness for prostate cancer and depression in men

Pretty small event - 30 men for 30 days.

But it eventually grew to an international movement called the Movember Foundation and to date it has raised 299 MILLION DOLLARS in global funds.

Sometimes, there's a whole lot more going on behind the beard, and over the next few weeks, we want to have some fun with No Shave November and at the same time take a closer look at a bearded man who played a HUGE role in the success of another bearded man.

If you grew up in church, you've probably figured out that we're talking about John the Baptist, who we'll learn over the next few Sundays, prepared the world in his time for the coming ministry of Jesus.

We'll learn about his mission and his message in coming weeks, but before we can even get to that, we need to take a Sunday and get to know the man behind the beard.

John was unique in 3 ways, and we'll find out that we are, too.

#### 1. He was unique in his birth

- a. The birth of babies is a big deal, and we all try to make the announcements as special as we can
- b. We make t-shirts with the news, use colored balloons to reveal gender, etc. I saw a video of a family who told their parents of an upcoming birth by putting a bun in the oven.
- c. Wendy and I announced one of our children by wrapping up the pregnancy test for her mom. Ahh, the wonderful gift of urine!
- d. But not many announcements top the one given about John the Baptist (except probably one, and as we'll learn in the series, John played a lot of second fiddle to his cousin, Jesus).
- e. There isn't a lot in the Bible about John's early childhood, but what is in there is amazing, and it all comes from Luke chapter 1
  - John had a father who was a priest and a mother who came from priests (v. 5)
  - His parents were righteous (v. 6) but childless (v. 7)
  - On a typical day doing his typical job, Zacharias had his life changed by God (vv. 8-11)
  - A son was promised, and he would:
    - o bring people joy (v. 14)
    - o be great in God's eyes (v. 15)
    - o be filled with the Holy Spirit IN THE WOMB (v. 15, see v. 41 for the fulfillment)
    - o bring people back to God (vv. 16-17)
- f. When an angel from heaven meets you on your job site to tell you that your son will prepare the way for the coming Messiah? That's one over the top birth announcement!
- g. John's dad couldn't believe it, and his doubt left him unable to speak (v. 20), and he ended up playing charades when he came out of the temple (vv. 21-22)
- h. John was without a doubt unique in his birth.
- i. But so are you! Psalm 139:13-16 says that God CRAFTED each of us as a master craftsman in the womb!
- j. There is no one like you. Throw away the mold!! You and I are unique in our birth.

2. He was unique in his life
  - a. How would you describe your childhood?
  - b. What games did you play with your family? With the neighborhood kids? At your school?
  - c. Have you ever talked with a loved one about their childhood? Didn't it make you love them even more?
  - d. We love to think back on the fun stuff we did as children, and I love to hear Wendy talking about all the tomboyish stuff she used to do with her cousins.
  - e. We never really get that chance with John. There is literally only 1 verse in the Bible about his childhood, and it's found in Luke 1:80.
  - f. It tells us that John continued to grow (physically), and to become strong in spirit (spiritually), and that he lived in the deserts.
  - g. Not the childhood we remember, is it?
  - h. It was a unique childhood.
  - i. And that uniqueness followed him into his adult life, as well.
  - j. His clothing was unique: camel's hair clothing (the original Camelbak!) with a leather belt (Mark 1:6)
  - k. His diet was unique: locusts and wild honey.
  - l. John the Baptist was the only man who would have looked at Bear Grylls and told him that he wouldn't get out alive!
  - m. He was unique in the life he lived, and we are to be, too!
  - n. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that there are works that only we can do. I can't do yours, you can't do mine. Unique!
  - o. Romans 12:2 calls us to not conform to the world - stand out - be unique!
  - p. 1 Peter 2:9 calls us - the followers of Jesus - peculiar people! Different, unique!
  - q. John was unique in his birth (angel announcement, Holy Spirit empowered) and in his life (his growth in the desert, his life in the wilderness, his odd dress and diet).
  - r. We're each unique in the same ways.
  - s. But the real question is why, right?
  
3. He was unique in his purpose
  - a. We'll talk more about John's mission and message over the next few weeks, but for now, let's just make the obvious point that the purpose of God in John's life is what led to the unique birth and life
  - b. In other words, nobody's eating a crazy diet like locusts and honey for no reason
  - c. But John knew something early on that guided his life and his choices
  - d. He knew that he was born with a unique purpose, and that purpose was prophesied over him and in front of all who were present to hear it.
  - e. We can read it in Luke 1:76-79, and we'll find out that John was destined to:
    - make the way for Jesus,
    - teach of a coming forgiveness of sins that would lead to salvation,
    - reveal to people the tender, merciful God that would love them enough to send His Son (John 3:16),
    - point to light (Jesus) who would soon shine in the darkness, and
    - lead others toward peace
  - f. Needless to say, there has never been another John the Baptist, and there never will be.
  - g. He was unique in his purpose to be the frontrunner for the Messiah.
  - h. It was a role so unique we'll spend more time on other Sundays examining it, but for now we can simply say that his purpose - his role - was unique.
  - i. But so is yours and mine. All of us have a common goal - pointing people to Jesus - but each of us has a unique role to play in it.
  - j. Our goal? Glorify God (Ecclesiastes 12:13; 1 Corinthians 10:31) and point people to Jesus (Acts 1:8; 26:16).
  - k. Our role in that goal? Different for every one of us, because we've each been uniquely hand-crafted for God to use in that common goal.
  - l. Acts 13:36 - David served the purpose of God of his generation. John did, and so must each one of us.
  - m. That's today's Big Idea, too: **Like John, each of us has a unique role in a common goal.**
  - n. All of us are called to point people to Jesus, but none of us will ever do it the same way.
  - o. We'll point people to Jesus in the way that God prepared us for uniquely when he formed us and gave us the gifts and personalities that He did.

The Landing

All this month, people (and many of the men in this church) will be growing beards and mustaches that they hope will set them apart as unique, but let me show you one last picture that hopefully will illustrate that our uniqueness comes from who we are more than from what's on our face.

(Me and Phil Robertson side by side)

What's the biggest difference between the 2? How about millions of dollars!!

The external things in our lives will never make us unique, because the value of our uniqueness comes from what's behind all that stuff.

If a beard is valuable, it's only because the man behind the beard is valuable.

You and I were created as unique pieces of God's handiwork, and that alone makes us priceless.

My prayer for each of us is that we will live our lives this week knowing how valuable we are to God and one another, and that together we would find our unique role in the common goal of helping others draw near to God through Jesus.

Let's pray.