

Matthew 3:1-3:12

OPEN: (I preached this sermon in hunting gear with a "deer call" around my neck. The opening 6 minutes were from a video of Jase Robertson telling of his first attempt at witnessing – answering a "prank" phone call at midnight and witnessing for 3 hours. You can find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eREBIFrL0jI> [0:16 thru 6:18])

What you've just seen is the testimony of Jase Robertson about how he got into the habit of witnessing to people about Christ. His passion for sharing Christ with others is something the entire Robertson clan is dedicated to. In fact, they're so driven by this desire to tell others about Christ that Alan Robertson (the beardless son who has been preaching in their home church) said:

"We're kind of the John the Baptists of the 21st century. It's how you imagine, with the wild hair and the locusts."

Exactly who was this John the Baptist they're comparing themselves to?
Well, John was a special man chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.

According to Matthew 3:4 "John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey."

"People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River." Matthew 3:5-6

People left their homes, their villages, their cities – and they flocked to the Jordan River to see this prophet of God as he preached. Why would they do that? Why would they leave their homes and villages to come to listen to this man?

Well, the Bible doesn't say... but I've got a pretty good idea.

In a day when there was no TV or Radio, John was an entertaining man to watch

He was different than anyone else they knew.

He dressed different, he ate different, and he talked different. He told people things they didn't hear anywhere else.

In short, John the Baptist was a lot like the men you see on Duck Dynasty.

And, John's message was very straightforward:

- You've sinned and you need to repent
- You need to be baptized for the forgiveness of those sins
- And there is someone I want to tell you about... who will change your life.

In short, he was a lot like the men you see on Duck Dynasty.

All the men on Duck Dynasty will tell you that same message:

- You've sinned and need to repent
- You need to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins
- And there's someone I want to tell you about... who will change your life.

They all preach that same message.

BUT they all preach the message in slightly different ways.

Jase Robertson for example strikes me as a laid back, easy going man. He's kind of an "aw-shucks" kind of guy. I can not picture him being an "in-your-face" kind of witnesser, but I CAN visualize him being a no-nonsense, straightforward man of faith. I can see him saying: "This is the way it is... take it or leave it" and being more than happy to tell you about Jesus. I could picture him talking to a prank caller for 3 hours from midnight till 3 in the morning and I can visualize him honestly telling them what he knew and believed about Jesus.

Like the other 3 men of the Robertson family I'm going to tell you about this morning, Jase's witness is real and authentic.

ILLUS: Does anybody know what the Robertson clan sells that has made them millions of dollars? That's right (holding up the deer call and pretending it's a duck call – I'll explain it later) they've made tons of money because they've made duck calls that sound like ducks. That was Phil Robertson's passion. He had grown disappointed with the duck calls on the market at the time and set about creating a call that satisfied him as being "realistic" and "authentic". He figured Ducks wouldn't be fooled by anything less.

In the same way, the Robertson's witness is real and authentic. This is what they really believe. But their method of sharing their faith is as distinctive as they are. For example, I believe Jase is the most likely to use his passion for hunting and his role on Duck Dynasty as props. In fact Jase even said: "I'm going to use whatever God blesses me with as a platform to tell the world that God is for you."

Jase uses what God has given him as a platform, a prop, a tool... to talk about Jesus. Most of the time he's talking about ducks and hunting. That's his platform, his prop. He talks about his passion for Duck hunting and uses it as a tool to introduce people to Christ.

ILLUS: Now, if you're like Jase Robertson, the most natural thing in the world is for you to talk about something you enjoy or something you enjoy doing. If you notice what you talk about the most throughout the week you'll pinpoint what it is that is your passion in life. It could be your family, or a special hobby, or a sport you're you play or that you follow closely. It could be a prized collection you have, or it could be your work. Something drives you. Something intrigues you. And you will talk about that passion to whoever will listen. And I'm hoping Jesus is your passion as well. I'm hoping that you'd like to find a subtle way introducing people to the Savior you love. So get creative. Find a way to connect WHAT you love with THE ONE you love (Jesus). That's what Jase does.

ILLUS: In fact, that's what I do. Being a preacher makes it easier because I talk about you folks a lot. I brag on this church to anyone who'll listen. You're my prop. You're one of my ways of introducing others to Jesus. I have one set of relatives that this particularly annoys. They say all I ever talk about is my family and my church! Well, duh. I have a family and I serve a church... of course I'm going to talk about those things. And what annoys them most is that I introduce Jesus all through the conversation. But that's OK. I mean to do that.

But what if you don't know how to get started? What if you're shy like Jase Robertson? What if you don't know how to get a conversation started. Well, you could do what Jase did: he prayed about it. He prayed that God would give him an opportunity to talk to someone. And, you know, if you pray about it, God just might give you a crank call around midnight where you'll be able to share your faith for a couple hours with someone you don't even know.

So that's how Jase does shares his faith.

He takes what he loves to do and he uses it as a platform to talk about the ONE that he loves.

Now his brother Willie Robertson is a different in how he witnesses.

Willie's a little more assured about himself ... and he's even gone to Bible College.

I watched a video where he gave a talk at Harding University some time back and he said this:

"Let me tell you what they want to know from me. It's not hunting, it's not TV.

It's what I've gathered over my life from this (The Bible). I tell you – this I know (holding up Bible)"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Zf227NaFpg>)

In other words: Willie's not into props when he talks about Jesus.

He has a different approach.

What's his approach?

Well, he listens for problems people have. And he asks them questions.

In that video I recently watched Willie shared about a man he baptized:

"I baptized a guy who will be in the Hall of Fame – a very famous guy. So much money, it just got silly how much money this guy's got. And God put me in his house and we're sitting up late one night and I hadn't said anything to him. We just hung out and he said:

'How do I be a Christian? I've seen Christians and honestly I don't really like any of them. I don't like the way it comes across. Now what you're doing I could do that.'

This is before Duck Dynasty."

I sat down and I said 'Well, let's just start right here....'

Mostly what I do is I just listen. I don't stick it in your face. I just listen. And when I hear problems I show solutions. I just listened to this guy and I took him to Galatians 5 and I read through the acts of the sinful nature. And I said 'Does any of those hit you?'

And he went 'All of them.'

And I'd never had anyone say 'all of them.'

'Do you know what the Gospel is?'

No clue.

'Do you know about heaven? Have you ever come to the Lord? Maybe at camp when you were 12?'

'Nope!'

Nothing. This guy was zero, empty. He had nothing, he had no knowledge. He had more

money than he knew what to do with, very famous, and he had nothing. He was empty. He had no hope, he had no joy. He had money and he had fame and it made him miserable. Some of THE most miserable people I have ever met in my life are those people. We went to his hot tub that night. He had just built a pool and a hot tub... nobody had ever been in it, and I baptized him into the Lord that night."

What had Willie done? How had he gotten this man to make his decision for Christ? He'd listened to the man.... and he asked questions.

- Do you know what the Gospel is?
- Do you know about heaven?
- Have you ever come to the Lord?

ILLUS: If you look through the book of Acts you'll find that was a technique they used even back then. They asked questions.

- For example, Philip was sent by God to witness an Ethiopian Eunuch. To start the conversation, Philip noted the man was reading from a Bible scroll of Isaiah. He asked the Eunuch: "Do you understand what you're reading?" (Acts 8:30). When the Ethiopian said no, Philip climbed up in the chariot and began to explain about Jesus. It doesn't get much easier than that. You ask "do you understand what you read out of the Bible? Would you like me to help you?" And then use those questions as a way to introduce them to Jesus.
- And when Paul stood before King Agrippa he asked the King: "do you believe the prophets?" (Acts 26:27). You simply ask: "Do you believe what the Bible says?" If they don't you explain why you do and you talk about Jesus. If they do believe the Bible then you can use that as a way to introduce Christ.
- And when Ananias taught Paul he asked this question: "What are you waiting for? Arise and be baptized calling upon the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). In other words – make a decision! Make a choice! Decide to belong to Christ and don't put it off!

Questions are good because they help you understand WHERE the person is with God. And questions can also help the person you're talking to think about what God wants from them.

For example, you might ask someone:

1. Do you know as much about your Bible as you'd like? This is the one I use a lot. When I ask that question, most people respond "not really", and that gives me the opportunity to ask: "Would you like to? We could have a Bible study where I could teach you about God's Word."
2. Or you could ask "Do you believe God loves you?" There are a lot of people who don't think God cares for them. And that would give you an opportunity to explain that God so loved – not only them - but the whole world so much that He gave His only begotten Son..."
3. Or you could ask "If you died today, would you be sure you'd get into heaven?" Most people reply: "I think so" or "I'm not sure." And that would give you the opportunity to ask "would you like to be sure?" and then lead them in understanding the need for faith, and repentance, and confessing Jesus as Lord and Master, and being buried in the waters of baptism, and living for Christ.
4. Or you could ask "If you stood before God and He were to ask you why you should be allowed in, what would you say?" You know what most folks would say to this? They'd say

"I've been fairly moral" or "I've been a nice person." Then you can explain that God sees us as we are... and even we need to acknowledge that there are times we've been shamed by things we've said, or done, or thought. And those sins we try to ignore make us look a dingy gray against the purity of God.

The right questions set the tone for the conversation. And that's how Willie witnesses to other people.

So Jase is the laid-back witnesser. He shares his faith by using something he loves as a springboard to tie his passions of this world with his passion for Christ.

By contrast, Willie is the problem solver. He listens to people. He finds out what they need. He asks questions.

Either of those approaches would work for most of us.

But then we have Phil Robertson.

Phil is a "pure hunter". He's a single minded man who doesn't need an excuse to talk about his faith in Christ and who doesn't have to listen to you to know what your problem is: you're a sinner and you need what Jesus can supply. One of the observations a reporter made, was that Phil was like a sidewalk preacher – all he needs is an excuse and he's off and running telling you about Christ. In the midst of one of these preaching moments, reporter looked over at Willie and Willie just shrugged. He'd heard this before and was used to it.

Phil is probably more like John the Baptist than anyone else in the family. He just won't back off about the evil of sin. He just won't back down when calling sin "sin".

Phil's son Alan once joked: "If telling my dad to be more diplomatic in his approach to saying things worked, I would have done it a long time ago."

Phil Robertson won't be diplomatic about God's Word.

He's not going to back down or back off.

And because he won't back down or back off... you do remember what he nearly lost don't you?

(His TV show)

Now, John the Baptist was very much like that. John the Baptist was not a very "diplomatic" guy.

Luke 3:7-9 tells us that John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Does that sound real diplomatic to you? Doesn't to me either.

John the Baptist wouldn't back off from declaring the evils of sin. He wouldn't back down when it came to calling sin "sin". And you know what he lost because he wouldn't back off

and back down? (His head)

So Phil Robertson is not a “diplomatic” man when it comes to his witnessing. But it would be a mistake to confuse a “lack of diplomacy” with a lack of love for the lost. And it’s that love for the lost that drives Phil Robertson to be so blunt.

ILLUS: Phil Robertson got into trouble because of an interview with a reporter from GQ Magazine. Initially the whole family – and part of the film crew – were there for the interview. But the reporter was so hostile and offensive that EVERYBODY left the room... except for Phil. And there was a reason for that.

Now I've read the article this reporter wrote for GQ. And it was painful to read. To say the man cursed like a sailor would be an insult to sailors. And it was obvious in the article that he had an underlying contempt for Christianity.

(<http://www.gq.com/entertainment/television/201401/duck-dynasty-phil-robertson?currentPage=1&printable=true>)

But as I read the article I noticed something else. There – just beneath the surface) was a grudging respect for Phil that showed up. For example, the reporter shared this thought: “I am comfortable here in these woods with Phil and his small cache of deadly weaponry. He is welcoming and gracious. He is a man who preaches the gospel of the outdoors and, to my great envy, practices what he preaches...”

And toward the end of his article he writes: “There will be no family dinner tonight. No cameras in the house. No rowdy squirrel-hunting stories from back in the day. There will be only the realest version of Phil Robertson, hosting a private Bible study with a woman who, according to him, “has been on cocaine for years and is making her decision to repent. I’m going to point her in the right direction.”

Just behind the contempt this guy has for religion, and underneath the foul language, was a grudging admiration for this man that he doesn’t quite understand. So much so that when Robertson asks him: “So you and your woman: Are y’all Bible people?”

The reporter responds: “Not really, I’m sorry to say.”

Sorry to say? That sounds like regret to me.

What happened? What had Phil done to get this pagan reporter to begin to regret some things about his life?

Well, Phil got that done because he wasn't doing an interview, he was working on a lost soul.

One of the things Phil did to reach out to this man was to take him out shooting. They got into Phil’s truck with a loaded 22 on the floor and a loaded and cocked crossbow on the dash (with the safety on) and they drove out to a desolate spot in the woods. Phil tossed out a water bottle for a target, handed the reporter takes the 22, takes aim, and – to his amazement – he hits the bottle first time. Then Phil hands him the crossbow and tells him sight in the bottle for another shot. Another direct hit.

Phil smiled and said: "What do they call you where you're from? Deadeye? Let me guess: You were a mischievous boy when you were younger."

And in the article, the man noted: "I was indeed. Perhaps I should have stayed that way." To hear the regret in his voice? "I should have stayed that way."

Gradually, Phil was working on the man's thinking.

All the time that reporter was interviewing Robertson, Robertson was preaching to that reporter.

At one point Robertson lays it all on the line... and the reporter records it: "If you simply put your faith in Jesus coming down in flesh, through a human being, God becoming flesh living on the earth, dying on the cross for the sins of the world, being buried, and being raised from the dead—yours and mine and everybody else's problems will be solved. And the next time we see you, we will say: 'You are now a brother. Our brother.' So then we look at you totally different then. See what I'm saying?"

And the interviewer wrote: "I think so?"

"I think so?"

A seed has been planted in the mind of this intellectual man from the city.

A doubt has taken root about the truths he's held as being so true, and a question begins to nag at him: "Maybe this Phil Robertson is right about something."

You see, Phil doesn't need a prop and he doesn't listen for problems. He simply preaches Christ crucified... buried and risen from the dead. And that's why he's baptized over 300 people in the river out back of his house.

CLOSE:

The reason each of these Robertsons are so effective in sharing their faith... is because they believe it. Jesus is real to them. Jesus has made a difference in their lives. Jesus took a family that was torn apart... and put it back together again.

It's real to them and they can make it real to others.

It's just like their duck calls. If the duck calls didn't sound like ducks they wouldn't sell very well. I've been holding this (hold up the deer call) and telling you it's a duck call. It's not. It's a deer call. It won't attract ducks because it doesn't sound like a real duck. It will never persuade or attract a duck. The only thing that will do that is something that sounds real and authentic.

One of the most telling comments in the GQ article is this: "When Uncle Si went to Conway, Arkansas, recently for a paid appearance, 20,000 people showed up. It led the local news that night in Little Rock.

The show is merely the platform. The end goal is to save souls. And the Robertson family is more than happy to sacrifice a little privacy out here in the woods... to spread the good word.

'For the sake of the Gospel, it was worth it,' Phil tells me."

And that's the way it needs to be for us.

Now, here's the deal. The reason the Robertsons have been so successful in sharing their faith is because they BELIEVE what they're saying. They've seen the dramatic difference Jesus has made in their lives and so they are convinced of the truth of what they share. By contrast, many of us have been going to church all our lives. We've grown up surrounded by God's truth, but we've never been on the other side of life where the world can beat folks down and destroy their very souls. We've not seen the dramatic change Christ can make in a person's life. Thus, if you and I are going to make our witness real and authentic... we need to do some soul searching. We need to ask ourselves why we believe what we believe. And once we find that answer inside of us it will be easier to tell people what Jesus means to us.

However, there may be people here who don't belong to Christ. People who have seen what the world can do to damage and destroy their lives and they know they need Jesus. That's why we have a time of invitation...