



the visual **faith** project

A Visual Faith Experience **Being Different & Not Fitting In**

By Dr. Dick Hardel

Theme: Being Different/Not Fitting In (Luke 3:1-18)

Intended Audience

Small discussion group of youth or adults, or intergenerational small group

Outcome of Experience

In sharing some characteristics and feelings of being different than others the participants will discuss positive ways God might be involved and how the differences can be used to serve and help others who struggle with their identity and purpose.

Introduce Experience

Recall a time when you sensed that your beliefs and values were very different from your friends or other members of your family. Or think about a time when you were at an event in which you felt that you just did not fit or connect with others at that event or the purpose of the event. What makes you uniquely you?

Image Selection

Choose one or two images that exhibit unique characteristic about how you describe your identity, who you are.

Facilitators Questions To Guide Group Discussion

Note to the Facilitator: Give opportunities for others in the group to ask their questions to the one who shared story, response, or feelings.

1. How does the image connect to a characteristic that you perceive makes you unique?
2. Have you ever experienced being excluded from a group because you were told verbally or non-verbally, "You don't fit in?"
3. How did you respond? What emotions were you feeling as you decided on your response?
4. What were feelings you had when someone spoke highly of you?
5. When you see another person who is being excluded or shunned by other groups, how do you respond? What feelings motive your choice of response? Do you ever wonder where God is in such situations?

Scripture (Included on Page 3)





the visual **faith** project

Being Different & Not Fitting In Experience continued...

Like many of the prophets in the Old Testament John the son of Zechariah was called by God to proclaim God's word to people who did not want to hear. Some people responded positively and others out of fear for his message tried to destroy the messenger. John was a unique character by how he dressed, where he lived and worked, as well as the truth that he spoke to the people.

Choose one or two images that describe feelings within John in this story or feelings of other people who he confronted.

Questions to Connect Chosen Image with Scripture

1. What feelings might John, the Baptizer, have experienced when growing up?
Do you think he would have fit in with other young people in his village?
2. Why were some people so attracted to this character, who did not seem to fit in with society?
What images depict the feelings of those people?
3. Why might other people be afraid of this unique person, John?
What images display the emotions of those people?
4. Do you think John was aware of God's purpose for John's unique qualities or characteristics?
Who or what shaped John's character and action?

Application

- What connection might there be between the image(s) that you first chose about your characteristics and uniqueness and the image(s) you chose concerning the Biblical story?
- How do you think God is shaping you to use your unique gifts?
- When you struggle with the positive and negative feelings about your character and beliefs, who is it that speaks forth God's word of love, mercy, and forgiveness to you?

Prayer

As the facilitator, direct the participants to a special prayer room or area. Have each small group sit on chairs in a circle with an empty chair placed in the middle of the circle. Instruct the small group or groups that each person will have the opportunity to sit in the chair in the center of their circle. When the person is seated in the center chair, the others seated in the circle will one by one thank God for a unique characteristic of the person on the center chair, using this prayer phrase: *Gracious God, I thank you for the gift of in that makes her/him outstanding!*



the visual faith project

Being Different & Not Fitting In Experience continued...

Scripture (Luke 3:1-18)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, 2 During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” 11 In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” 13 He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.” 15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,

16 John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

Image Packs

We recommend the Youth Pack (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find the Youth Pack at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>