How to Relax
John 3:22-36

ETS: John the Baptist stated that it was time for his ministry to decrease as Christ's increased.
ESS: If we understand our role, then we have no problem with allowing God to be in control
OSS: I want people to relax and let God do His work in their lives and in the world
PQ: Are you resting in the Lord?
UW: Relaxation

ME

SPA/Message

Why do people get messages?
Why do people go to the spa?

Sitting on the **Beach**

How do you like to relax?

Sad Fact: We live in a TENSION-FILLED world

- Evidence from **surveys**, health organizations, and longitudinal studies indicates that **people are generally more tense** (stressed, anxious, or

experiencing higher levels of negative emotions) **now than in the past**, particularly **compared** to recent decades like the 1990s or pre-2010s.

- **Daily stress** and anxiety have risen over time.
  - For example, **middle-aged Americans** (roughly 45–65) reported about **19% more daily stressors** in the 2010s than in the 1990s, equating to **roughly 64 extra days of stress per year.**
- **Self-reported anxiety** has climbed:
  - In recent APA polls (2024), **43% of US adults** felt more anxious than the previous year (up from 37% in 2023 and 32% in 2022), driven by concerns like the **economy**, **elections**, and **global** events.

If you constantly feel stressed…

- If you feel STRESSED about the **war** with IRAN
- If you are STRESSED about **politics**
- If you are STRESSED about the **future**
- If you are STRESSED about your **retirement**
- IF you are STRESSED about **LIFE**,
- If you are STRESSED about TAXES
  - Then here is how you can relax

GOD

Passover: Nicodemus

John 3:22-24 After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, where he spent time with them and baptized. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there. People were coming and being baptized, 24 since John had not yet been thrown into prison.

Jesus and John the Baptist's ministries are **OVERLAPPING**!

Jesus moves from Jerusalem to the **Judean countryside**

- If my timing is correct, this is probably **5-6 months** *after* Jesus' baptism
    - It's in the **Spring**, right after Passover
        - **Thousands** of people have **streamed** into **Jerusalem** for **Passover**
            - According to **John 2:23**, Jesus was **healing** many people in Jerusalem
            - **Before** traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus had turned **water into wine**
                - I think there was a **five-month gap** before Jesus came to Jerusalem for His first Passover, when He healed many in Galilee.

Jesus has **moved** from **Jerusalem** to the **Judean** Countryside

- He has moved NEAR John the Baptist!

Jesus' popularity is quickly growing

- Jesus is **eclipsing** John the Baptist's ministry!
  - **John 3:26** "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him."
  - **John 4:1** When Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John…

John the Baptist is also popular!

- **John 3:23** "and people were coming and being baptized

John the Baptist has **moved from** "Bethany beyond the Jordan" to "Aenon near Salim"

- We **don't know** exactly where Aenon was, but clearly **John has moved** since he baptized Jesus, and **Jesus** has **now moved** somewhere **near** John

<u>WHY would Jesus move near John the Baptist?</u>

- <u>Is Jesus trying to **compete** with John?</u>

- Is it to **signal** to John that his ministry is **ending**?
- Is it to **test John**?
- Is it to **allow John** to use this as a **teaching moment**?

Let's continue

John 3:25-26 Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew about purification. 26 So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him."

- What is the **connection** to the question about "Purification" and Jesus baptizing?
    - We don't know the exact issue, but this unnamed "Jew" (i.e., a *religious leader*) was questioning whether **John's baptism erased** the need for Jewish purification rituals.

This prompts a question from John's disciples

- Is the baptism of this Jesus, whom John called the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world", greater than John's baptism?
    - If their answer to the **Jew** about **purification** was that **John's baptism did not replace** the need for purification, *was it possible that Jesus baptism did*?

- Was Jesus' baptism better than John's baptism?

It may be that this question by "a Jew" was designed to create a COMPETITION between John the Baptist and Jesus!

- "Which baptism is better: Jesus or John the Baptist's?"
- "Which baptism has a more purifying effect: Jesus or John the Baptist's?"

If this "Jew" (likely a religious leader from Jerusalem) can create **friction and competition** between Jesus and John the Baptism that would be great!

- "A house divided against itself cannot stand."
- A church divided will not last
- A country divided will eventually fail

How John answers his disciples is going to be very important!

- If John says, "I was the first to baptize people from repentance, Jesus is copying me," then you have a **competition**!

If Satan can **create competition** between Jesus and John, there will be tension, arguing, and infighting.

- Jesus' ministry could quickly **implode** if His disciples **start warring** against John's disciples!
    - If they could **start fighting**, then they would become distracted from the mission.

John's answer is important

- It could set the tone for his ministry moving forward

How did John **release** the **TENSION**?
How did John **essentially** tell his disciples to RELAX?
How can **you and I** RELAX as we go through this life?

Relax by Acknowledging God's Gifts

John 3:27 John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.

- Instead of **creating** an atmosphere of **tension** and **competition**, John **DEFLATES** the situation!

John reminds them that **God** was the ONE who **gives us our mission and gifts**

Did John ask to be born to an elderly couple? NO!
Did John ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit while in utero? NO!

God empowered John the Baptist with the gift of the Holy Spirit to carry out a mission.

TENSION: We try to become something we are gifted to become!

- **At 15**, I suddenly decided I wanted to play the organ at the Paramount Pizza Palace
    - Until that point, I really did not care too much about music
        - I started playing the piano at age 7, but I was not a "natural" at it
            - I "did my time" and then went outside and played.

I think the lights and the massive instrument just fascinated me, and I decided that was what I wanted to do.

- When I talked about it to my grandmother, she said, "Jimmy, you can do anything you want to do"
    - I had decided I wanted to play the Mighty Wurlitzer

I worked hard

- I'd ride the bus to the downtown theater and practice 3 hours after school every night

- Other days, I went to the local Baptist church that had a big pipe organ and I'd practice till late every night.
- I listened to records, went to concerts, read books…it was my passion

The PROBLEM: MUSIC was NOT my natural gift.

- I won a few competitions, but I never really enjoyed performing
    - I dreamed of performing, but I avoided it when possible.

I lived with a **constant tension**

- I was trying to force myself to be someone I wasn't.

Before the music issue, I would spend hours in my room acting like I was teaching a class.

- In my senior year, I tried out for the school play. I had never acted before, and I got the lead role.
    - Many thought I would go into acting after graduation!
        - WHY? It was natural for me.
- Reading was easy for me
    - I can read quickly and without stumbling through a passage

MY POINT: STOP trying to be something you are not!

Romans 12:4-8 "Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. 6 According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one's faith; 7 if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; 8 if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness."

TENSION occurs when we try to BE something we are not **gifted by God** to do!

How do you know what **God has gifted** you to do?

- What brings **joy** to your heart?
- What do you feel **relaxed** doing?
- What do you do that others have responded **positively** to?

I'm not saying you don't have to WORK at **sharpening** your gift
I'm not saying that using your gift won't be without its **challenges**

- But it is something you enjoy doing to the glory of God

What we have has been given to us from God.

- God has given you the **abilities**, **talents**, and **gifts** that you have.
    - You **cannot earn** or **force God** to give you anything.

John's answer began by acknowledging that what he had was given to him by God.

<u>How did John **essentially** tell his disciples to RELAX?</u>
<u>How can **you and I** RELAX as we go through this life?</u>

Relax by Remembering Your Mission

- **John 3:28** "You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, ***but I've been sent ahead of him.'***

John's mission was to prepare the way for the Lord. John **prepared the way** by…

- **Baptizing** those who were **seeking** after God in the wilderness
- **Baptizing Jesus** to inaugurate His ministry

- **Proclaiming** to the people, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."
- **Preparing** the initial disciples of Jesus

John KNEW his mission!

Jesus coming to baptize *NEAR* John was a signal that John's ministry was now **drawing** to a close!

John had a new Mission: **John 3:30** He must increase, but I must decrease."

- John's mission was to fade away and let Christ shine!

KNOW your mission!

OUR MISSION: "To Connect People to God's Hope and Love; Helping All become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ."

OUR VISION: "To be a Diverse Family United in Impacting All People for Christ.

Our **mission** as a church is to reach people for Christ

- Giving to the CP **(IMB/ILC)**
- Sharing the Gospel
    - Starting Drive Through Prayer soon

    - Internet Ministry
    - Personal Evangelism
- Using the facility to reach different segments of our community
- NEW OPPORTUNITY: LIFEWISE Academy
    - Opportunity to reach young people starting this Fall

Does the Mission of the church or individuals enter into NEW PHASES? YES!

- Can the mission of a church be to "Decrease" so a new work can start? Yes!

Knowing YOUR MISSION as a Person, as a church, RELEASES a lot of TENSION

- **Your mission:** To be a **father or mother** who models loving Jesus through your relationship with your wife or husband
- **Your mission:** To be a **grandparent** who models loving Jesus through your relationship with your children and grandchildren
- **Your Mission:** To live a life so that others see Christ in you!
- **Your Mission:** To grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your Mission: To DECREASE so that Christ can INCREASE in your life!

How did John **essentially** tell his disciples to RELAX?
How can **you and I** RELAX as we go through this life?

Relax by Remembering WHO You are

John KNEW WHO he was!

- **John 3:28** "You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.'

John KNEW his position: "I am not the Messiah"

- That has to take a LOT of pressure off John!

WE create TENSION when WE try to be the MESSIAH!

Remember, WHO you are!

Who are You?

- You are a **SAINT**

A SAINT is:

- **Holy**: Set Apart (You are NOT a sinner)
- **Blameless** b/c Jesus took your sin upon Himself

- **Adopted** into His family
- **Freed** from the Slavery of sin (Redeemed)
- **Forgiven** of sins both past, present, and future
- **Accepted** into His family—even if you are NOT a Jew by birth, God has accepted you.
- **Sealed by the Holy Spirit**

MY POINT: Know WHO You are!

You are all those things, but you are also a "**SLAVE**" of Christ!

- We are SERVANTS of the most High God!

When we know WHO we are: Saints who are SERVANTS of Christ, *the RESULTS are RELAXING!*

John 3:29 "He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete.

Look at what the "Groom's friend" does…

- "Stands by and listens for him"

To be able to "Stand by" the groom, you have to KNOW the groom!

- You'll never be at **peace**,
    - You'll never be able to RELAX
        - If you **don't know** the **Groom**: Jesus' Christ!

If you say you KNOW the Groom, but you are not "Listening for Him"…

- You **may NOT KNOW** Him OR
    - You have **forgotten** to **RELAX** and **simply be there** to **serve** Him.

God is NOT an UNKIND Master!

- God is a MASTER who LOVES His SERVANTS
    - He calls His SERVANTS, His FRIENDS

<u>Have you ever had a BOSS who cared about You?</u>

- I have: Dan Garland
    - RESULT: I wanted to **work** for him!
    - RESULT: I wanted to give him my **best**!
    - RESULT: I was proud to be a **part** of the **company**

God is a Self-sacrificing MASTER who LOVES His children

- If you can grasp that truth, you can RELAX

John was NOT going to take the BAIT and get into a competition with Jesus!

- He was the "Groom's friend"

- HE "Stood by" and "Listened for Jesus."
- He "rejoiced greatly at the groom's voice."
- He was filled with "joy'

HOW could John to do this?

- John knew **WHO he was**
  - He WAS ***NOT*** "the Messiah"
  - He was "The groom's friend"

How did John **essentially** tell his disciples to RELAX?
How can **you and I** RELAX as we go through this life?

Relax by Knowing and Trusting Christ

Many people are TENSE right now over what is occurring in the Middle East!

- If you have a loved one in the **military**, I can understand your concern
  - War is **ugly**, and **people** are **killed** or **injured** in many ways
    - *We PRAY for the day when there is NO MORE WAR!*
      - WE LONG for the day when there is no more sorrow, sickness, pain, or death!

We **pray**: Lord Jesus, Please Return!

We **teach**: Jesus is coming back!

REALITY: That DAY is not coming WITHOUT Wars FIRST

- **Matthew 24:6-7** "You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these events are the beginning of birth pains."

As a **woman** nears the **day of the birth**, those birth pangs get more condensed and more intense.

- The **20th century** (1901–2000) is widely regarded as having had the **most wars** since the 1st century AD, based on both the sheer number of conflicts and their scale.
    - The 20th century is at the end of the Second Day of Hosea 6

Comprehensive datasets, such as the Correlates of War (COW) project, systematically track conflicts from **1816 onward**.

- They show a **peak** in the number of ongoing wars (interstate, intrastate, extrastate, and non-state) during much of the 20th century, *especially post-*

World War II, with decolonization, Cold War proxy wars, and civil conflicts.

- ***Our World in Data*** graphs (drawing from the *Correlates of War project*) indicate the 20th century saw **frequent peaks of 20–30+ ongoing wars** annually in periods like the **1970s–1990s**, ***far exceeding earlier eras*** where records are sparser and conflicts often more localized.
- The **20th century experienced** near-**constant global conflict**, with no year free of major war (unlike earlier centuries with more gaps). Sources like the *Imperial War Museums* note that war occurred every year of the 20th century.

The **21st century** has seen a record-*high number of state-based armed conflicts*.

- **UCDP/PRIO** data shows **peaks** like 59 in 2023 and 61 in 2024 (*highest since 1946*), with conflicts in 34–36+ countries.

Many people are TENSE right now over what is **occurring** in the **Middle East** because they DO NOT understand Bible Prophecy.

- **60%** of the "Church" **spiritualizes** Bible prophecy

- They may teach that Jesus is returning, but they **dismiss all prophecies** regarding **Israel** and the **Middle East**.
  - For many, this **war is unnecessary**; ***yet it is necessary***!

Ezekiel 38:8-12 "After a long time you will be summoned. In the last years you will enter a land that has been restored from war and regathered from many peoples to the mountains of Israel, which had long been a ruin. They were brought out from the peoples, and all of them now live securely. 9 You, all of your troops, and many peoples with you will advance, coming like a thunderstorm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.

10 "This is what the Lord God says: On that day, thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will devise an evil plan. 11 You will say, 'I will go up against a land of open villages; I will come against a tranquil people who are living securely, all of them living without walls and without bars or gates— 12 in order to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against ruins now inhabited and against a people gathered from the nations, who have been acquiring cattle and possessions and who live at the center of the world.'

If **Ezekiel 38** is to occur and Israel is to be dwelling in safety, **Iran** must no longer be the largest sponsor of state terrorism, **Hezbollah** and **Hamas**, and the **Houthis** must be neutralized. Israel's threats must be destroyed.

You can be at peace, even in these turbulent times, rejoicing in God

- We are watching Bible prophecy unfold.
    - We are seeing what 2,000 years of believers did not see!
        - WHY? Because God has allowed us to live at the end of the Second Day
            - The THIRD DAY is Coming!

What does this have to do with John?

John, the Gospel writer, adds **commentary** to remind us of our position compared to Christ.

- **John 3:31** The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all.
    - **Contrast**: "one who comes from above is above all" = Jesus
        - Christ's person: MORE THAN A MAN: He is "from above"

- Repeat: "The one who comes from heaven is above all"
    - Christ's POSITION: He is "above all"
- John the Baptist: "from the earth"
- John the Baptist: "speaks in earthly terms"
    - Does not see the BIG picture
    - Limited in his understanding

Jesus' Issue: **John 3:32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony."

TENSION in this life is caused when you **REJECT Jesus**!

- When you REJECT Jesus' testimony about Himself
- When you REJECT Jesus' Plan for your LIFE and for this world

The only way to RELAX is to do the following….

John 3:33-35 The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. 34 For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. 35 The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands."

RELAXATION is possible ONLY when you KNOW and TRUST CHRIST!

- **A**dmit the need for a Savior

- **B**elieve that Jesus is the Son of God
- **C**onfess your need for Him to forgive you of your sins
- **C**all upon Christ to save you.

John states in **John 3:36**: "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."

WE

You don't need to live in TENSION
You don't need to live life WORRYING about the other person!

PS: TRUST Christ and Relax!