



AWKWARD: Week 1

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Created by Ministry to Youth

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AWKWARD

Week 1: The Road of Honey

Bible: Luke 3:1-14

Bottom Line: Even someone who doesn't have it all together can do something great for God.

OPENING GAME: WILL IT BLEND?

SUPPLIES

- Blender
- Fast food meal
- Assorted condiments
- Small cups
- Trash can

Warning: This game is disgusting.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Select a group of students who have strong stomachs and are willing to do anything.

In most cases, for us, this is middle school boys.

In front of the group blend a fast food meal: burger, French fries, and soda – all together.

For an added bonus, include an ice cream cone for dessert.

Next, pour the mixture into 5 small cups, and have the participants stand in a circle.

Play music as they pass one cup around – in a similar way to playing hot potato.

When the music stops, whoever has the cup must take a sip.

If a student spits it out, they have to sit down!

If they finish their sip, there still in.

Throw that cup away and then pass another cup around, play music, and repeat the game.

Watch how the crowd reacts during this disgusting challenge.

TEACH

How many of you felt sick when you saw them drink out of that cup?

I know a lot of people eat some weird things, but that was just plain gross.

This week, we're kicking off a new series called "Awkward," and I think that game definitely qualified as being AWKWARD!

We're going to start by talking about a guy in the Bible who was known for eating some awkward food... specifically, locust and honey.

Show pictures of locust and honey.

Wild honey isn't bad, but how many of you have tried locust lately?

Even though the things this man was known to eat was strange, God used him in a pretty cool way.

The guy's name was John the Baptist.

In Luke 3, John the Baptist is speaking to a crowd.

God has chosen John because of his obedience to be the prophet that would pave the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

Although John was a strange man (they said he dressed in burlap), and maybe a little bit awkward, he had a very important role.

How many of you have ever had a Power Wheels... like the kind you ride in?

Has anyone ever seen a commercial for Power Wheels?

The song was pretty awesome... *"POW, POW, Power Wheels"*...

The kids would drive these things up over a mountain, with a sunset in the background, or they would rush in just in time to save the day. Here check out this clip. It's kind of old...

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDBvQpH3j3c>

Wasn't that awesome?

They made a Power Wheels that was a dump truck.

It even had a cool button to dump the back of the truck.

You could fill it with dirt, or rocks, or even a younger sibling.

Even though you might feel like you were the coolest kid in the world when driving your Power Wheels, once you get older, you realize that a real car was much cooler than a battery-powered Power Wheel.

Don't get me wrong - Power Wheels were great, but they over promised and under delivered.

Once you've experienced what driving a real car is like, you would never want to go back to driving a power wheel.

I think a lot of us are stuck in cheap, over promised and under delivered versions of our faith.

Let me say it this way... many of us are more attracted with going through the motions of the Christian life than actually experiencing the miracles of the Christian life.

If we want to experience the Christian life that God has called us to, **then we must be willing to live differently. Sometimes that means that we are a little awkward, and different from the rest of the world.**

If you have your Bibles open them to **Luke 3:2-6 ESV.**

Even in this passage, it seems that John the Baptist isn't really saying something that would be out of the ordinary for people to hear.

This verse says that John went into the land proclaiming that we should repent to be forgiven of our sins.

Many probably responded "Oh boy, here goes another crazy, religious person".

But, there was something different about John.

There had not been a prophecy in Israel for about 400 years.

Sure there were a punch of imitations, but nobody listened.

Israel was waiting in anticipation for the *real* prophet to come, because they knew that it was *that* prophet's job to foretell the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

But it wasn't the message that was different about John, like I said earlier, people had heard that before, it was the method.

John demanded something of his hearers. He called them to repentance, change.

Let's talk about some things we need to do in order to live differently...

1. In order to live differently we must realize that we are not enough on our own, separated from God.

In the end of this section, Luke records a portion of the book of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before Jesus came onto the scene, and it says...

Read Luke 3:4-6

Many of us think that a relationship with God is a part of getting our lives in order.

We are not the answers to our problems. Jesus is.

The portion of this prophecy that really struck me was "the rough places shall become level ways."

Have you ever become so distracted with your circumstances that it feels like your whole life is in chaos?

Share a story from when you were a teenager where your circumstance made you feel like your life was in chaos.

Having a relationship with Jesus doesn't mean that your life will go perfect, but it does mean that you can find peace in the midst of difficult situations.

We have to realize that we are not enough. Our ideas, our plans, although they may be good, they're not God.

Jesus in us, is far better than anything I could ever come up with on my own.

I must realize that I alone am not enough.

Read Luke 3:7-9.

2. In order to live differently we must have a relationship with Jesus.

When John began baptizing people, the idea of baptism was new for the Jews.

During this time, if an outsider, a Gentile become Jewish, they would be baptized.

What John was preaching was that just because someone was born a Jew, did not assure a right relationship with God.

Many of us in this room today have grown up in religious homes.

Whether we grew up going to church every Sunday, or twice a year, some of us grew up automatically identifying with the faith of our parents or grandparents.

A relationship with Jesus Christ is something that is personal, and not inherited.

It is impossible to "ride on the coattails" of your grandmother's faith.

Jesus desires a personal relationship with YOU.

Each of you, every person of your family.

I read once about an instant cake mix that was a failure.

The instructions said all you had to do was add water and bake.

The company couldn't understand why it didn't sell - until their research discovered that the buying public felt uneasy about a mix that required only water.

Apparently, people thought it was too easy.

So, the company altered the formula and changed the directions to call for adding an egg to the mix in addition to the water.

The idea worked and sales jumped dramatically.

That story reminds me of how some people react to the plan of salvation.

To them it sounds too easy and simple to be true, even though the Bible says, "By grace you have been saved through faith...; it is the gift of God, not of works."

Ephesians 2:8-9

They feel that there is something more they must do, something they must add to God's "recipe" for salvation.

They think they must perform good works to gain God's favor and earn eternal life.

But, the Bible is clear -- we are saved, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy." **Titus 3:5**

The gospel we proclaim must be free of works, even though it may sound too easy.

John the Baptist concludes his sermon by saying "Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Read Luke 3:10-14

Have you ever heard a great sermon and wondered, "What do I do next?"

This is exactly how the crowds response to John's message.

John told the multitudes to practice generosity, a work of love as oppose to the works of the law.

Tax collectors and soldiers were to act honestly and justly in their professions.

Many of us though, when it comes to wanting to live differently believe that we must have a revolution of sorts in order for Jesus to be made known.

You see, Jesus is about changing the hearts of people.

Without the hearts of people changed, then people won't be able to change the world.

3. In order to live differently we must be willing to do things nobody else is doing.

Corruption, theft, disloyalty, and selfishness was rampant during this time, as it still is today.

If we want to be a people that live differently, we must be willing to do things nobody else is doing.

John did exactly that.

Although he may have been a little bit awkward, and a little different than others.

He did things nobody else was doing, and as a result, was able to pave the way for the arrival of Jesus.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is something from your childhood that seemed amazing when you were little, but you grew out of, as you got older?
2. What sticks out to you about John the Baptist that sets him apart from other prophets?
3. John the Baptist demanded repentance, or change, from his listeners. This was a method that they had not seen before, why do you think this method worked?
4. Sometimes it's hard for us to admit that we alone are not enough. What are some areas in your life that you struggle with admitting that you need God's help?
5. What was the "spiritual climate" of your home-growing up until now?
6. Does your life resemble that same "spiritual climate" and if so, how have you made that your own?
7. Why is it hard for us, at times, to believe the simplicity of the Gospel?
8. What are some of the most common "ingredients" we subconsciously add to the Gospel?
9. In order to live differently we must be able to do things nobody else is doing. What are some ways you can produce "good fruits" in ways no one else is doing?
10. How can we commit this week to live a Christian life that is not a cheap imitation but instead a picture of what God designed it to be?