**Building Core Strength**

**by Being Willing to Tell it Like it Is[[1]](#footnote-1)**

3 principles to be sure you are strong and ready when God wants to use you

**I. Embrace Cultural Difference as Ministry Opportunities**

A. Political persecution

**­Luke 3:1** - *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip…*

B. Religious oppression

**Luke 3:2** - *in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.*

**Matthew 3:7** - *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”*

As the curtain rose on the ministries of John and Jesus, Israel was shrouded in deep darkness. It was the bleakest of times politically. The nation chafed under the oppressive rule of pagan idolaters. Israel, God’s covenant nation, was now part of a minor province in a backwater region of the mighty Roman Empire. It was also the darkest of times spiritually. The Jewish people were crushed under the heavy burden of an apostate, legalistic, hypocritical religion dominated by corrupt, wicked spiritual leaders (cf. Matt. 23:1-33). Israel had not realized the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants; they possessed neither the land promised by the former, nor the kingdom promised by the latter. Engulfed in legalism, hypocrisy, and external ritual, the nation also failed to experience the New covenant blessings promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 37:26.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

**II. Work on the Depth of Your Ministry and Trust God for the Breadth**

A. The power of the wilderness

**Luke 3:2** - *…the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.*

**Luke 3:4** - *as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.’”*

B. Be ready because the opportunity may surprise you

**III. Be Prepared and Willing to Proclaim a Clear Biblical Message**

A. The necessity of repentance

**­Luke 3:8** - *Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father,” for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** - *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

B. The possibility of forgiveness

**Luke 3:3** - *And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;*

**1 Thessalonians 1:9** - *For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,*

C. The likelihood of being misunderstood

**Luke 3:15** - *Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,*

D. The possibility of some amazing results

**Luke 3:21-22** - *Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”*

1. Dr Steve Viars [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Luke 1-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)