

If you were a teen in the 1950s, you might have said, “He has it made in the shade, for he’s got some new peepers and cool threads. Did you hear he’s got a brand new ankle-bitter in his pad? Last time I visited I had to split, so I burned rubber before I told him to get bent.”¹

In the 1990s I heard my children say such things as “I’m da bomb! So boo-ya,” to which the other replied, “Yada, yada, yada.” When they weren’t happy with getting in trouble, I would hear them exclaim, “Whatever,” which of course was a way to “diss” me—an action described by another word from the 90s.

Now my adult daughter calls me “awesomesauce,” though there are still days when both my children LOL at their crazy dad.

Did any of that make any sense? If not, you might want to reply IDK. Every generation has its own set of words that young people use that often leave their parents wondering what they’re talking about.

Someone called the office this week, wondering about the title printed in the email. The caller asked Anna, “Is that the real title, or does Pastor Doug really not know what he’s talking about?” That comment prompted me to conduct a random poll on Thursday about my title. I asked the choir what they thought IDK meant. One person replied, “I don’t kill,” while another suggested, “I don’t care.” Another replied, “I don’t know, but I hope to find out on Sunday!”

There are times in all our lives when we face a situation and reply, IDK, which in today’s shorthand texting language means, “I don’t know.” When the bills are more than the income, how do we pay all the expenses? IDK. When the doctor gives us an unfavorable report and we ask for the prognosis, we might hear the honest answer, I don’t know.

It appears that John the Baptizer 2000 years ago had one of those IDK days, for he didn’t know if Jesus was the one he had been waiting for. The writer Luke tells us that two of John’s followers had come to tell him about Jesus: how Jesus had healed

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an “outsider” centurion’s son (remember that story from last Sunday?), and then how Jesus raised to life a widow’s son. The crowds were suggesting that God had come to help the people, but John seemed to say “I don’t know,” for he wanted more information. Luke doesn’t tell us John’s motivation for wondering about Jesus’ actions, but another Gospel writer, Matthew, tells us that John was in prison when he sent two of his followers to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who is coming or should we look for someone else?”

Some Bibles translate the Greek word προσδοκῶμεν *prosdokomen* as “look for,” while others translate it as “wait for.” The word combines the tension of “waiting in fear” with “looking in hope.” It conveys an anxious anticipation mixed with a dash of optimism and a sprinkling of caution.

In a sense, the word captures how many of us are feeling after our recent Presidential election. There is a sense of hope that politics could change as we try new ideas and clean out corruption, and yet there’s apprehension with a leader who has no

political experience and creates travel policies without understanding the full implications. On the one hand, we hope for secure borders to reduce the number of terrorists entering our country, and yet we also want to be a welcoming nation to refugees, Muslims, and immigrants from many nations. How many of you have felt this tension—waiting in fear and looking for hope?

I think that’s what John the Baptizer was experiencing. He felt the tension between Jesus as the one sent by God to bring hope to the world, and the frustration that Jesus had not changed John’s own situation by overthrowing those in power who placed him in jail.

In Jesus’ day, the Messiah was expected to be a strong military leader who would overthrow corrupt systems and usher in a world of peace. John had high hopes that God was sending the Messiah, that Jesus was the one they had been waiting for.

As John sat in prison, it makes sense that he would question if Jesus was the one he had been anticipating. He may have wondered, “Is healing

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people and raising the dead something a Messiah would do before overthrowing the corrupt political powers?” And so he sent a few guys to ask Jesus, “Are you the one, or should we wait for another?”

Jesus replied, as our choir so wondrously echoed in song this morning, “Go tell John, what you see and hear: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.”

We don’t hear a reply from John, but I imagine he still might have said, “IDK. I was hoping for release from jail, but I’ll wait and see.”

After John’s messengers left, Jesus addressed the crowd, asking them what they thought of John. Hear how *The Message Bible* interprets the conversation as Jesus says:

“What did you expect when you went out to see him in the wild? A weekend camper? Hardly. What then? A sheik in silk pajamas? Not in the wilderness, not by a long shot. What then? A messenger from God? That’s right, a

messenger! Probably the greatest messenger you’ll ever hear. (Luke 7:24-27)

Luke tells us that some in the crowd agreed with these favorable comments, such as the tax collectors who had changed their lives and had been baptized by John. They trusted in the One John said was coming. Others, such as those who controlled the religious and legal systems, replied with more than a simple IDK—they refused to follow.

Jesus defended John as one who was following on the right path, but Jesus didn’t claim to fulfill all the expectations of those waiting for him. He wasn’t their military conqueror leading armies to overthrow the powerful systems. Jesus suggested, however, “Look around. See what I’m doing. Decide for yourself.”

Although we Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah who brought God’s hope to the world, we may look around and still wonder when the world will be put right, when the pain and suffering will end. When someone asks, “Why do good people

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suffer and evil ones prosper?” we often reply, “I don’t know.” We’re a bit like the mother and baby camel who were talking one day when the baby camel asks, “Mom, why have I got these huge three-toed feet?”

Rather than saying, “I don’t know; ask your father,” the mother replies, “Well, son, when we trek across the desert, your toes will help you to stay on top of the soft sand.”

A few minutes later the young camel asks, “Mom, why have I got these long eyelashes?”

“They are there to keep the sand out of your eyes on the trips through the desert.”

“Mom, why have I got these great big humps on my back?”

“They are there to help us store fatty tissues for our long treks across the desert, so we can go without eating for long periods.”

“Let’s see, we have huge feet to stop us from sinking, long eyelashes to keep the sand out of our eyes, and these humps to store food.”

“Yes, dear. Doesn’t that make sense?”

“I don’t know” the young camel replied and then asked, “So why are we in the San Diego Zoo?”²

We may not always know the answers to the complex questions of life, and when we look around we may feel as confused as the baby camel muttering IDK. When struggling with the complexities of life, look to the hope and healing that Jesus offered, to those who could see and those who could hear, to those who trusted his promise. When doing so, our IDK transforms from “I don’t know” to IDKT “I Do Know and Trust.”

¹ See <http://coolestwords.com/content/top-15-slang-words-50%E2%80%99s>

² Adapted from *1002 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking*, Michael Hodgin, #1002.