

This lady told me that her grandfather came to this country as a young immigrant from Sicily, got on board a train in New York, fell asleep and woke up when the train stopped in Omaha. He got off and decided to start a family there. The barber who first cut his hair asked him sometime between the comb and the brush if he was married. He said no. The barber said, "I have a daughter." The man went to the barber's house, stood on the sidewalk and visited with the daughter who stayed on the porch. He went back to the barber and said, "She'll do." This lady who told me this story? That's how her family got started.

Matthew tells us a story today about how Jesus got started. He says Jesus started his career when Herod arrested John the Baptist. The Gospels leave enough clues to indicate that Jesus greatly admired John the Baptist. John started before Jesus, and drew a lot of people ready for a religious conversion. When Jesus came to John for baptism, he probably came to a mentor who had spoken to his heart and challenged him to fulfill God's will. But in Matthew's story, after the baptism, Jesus did not immediately begin his mission. Instead, he just went home. It was when Herod arrested John that Jesus realized he was in the wrong place, and boldly traveled where John had worked, within easy grasp of Herod. He proclaimed the same message as John, word for word: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." He collected disciples as John had done, and he devoted his life to preaching. The main difference between the two was their attitude. John darkly envisioned a terrible conclusion to the world and urged repentance to avoid eternal punishment. Jesus believed the kingdom was already present and promised blessedness for those who trusted in God. So even though he picked up where John left off, Jesus Christ was like John the Baptist lite, a decaffeinated version of this rousing speaker, but with a keener insight into the mysteries of God.

We get our start in a family or a career in unique ways. Sometimes it seems like sheer coincidence. Sometimes it's because we truly admire the example someone has set. Sometimes it's a determination not to be like someone who has disillusioned us--Michael Jackson and Lisa Presley, an alcoholic parent, or an embarrassed field goal kicker. But however we start, when we follow where God leads, people tell our story.