

Following Jesus

DAILY DEVOTIONS • PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE • LIFE GROUPS

FOLLOW JESUS . . . MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Matthew 3:1-17

- ***What would you like to see the Lord do in, for and through your life in 2022?***
- **The Lord will help us to accomplish lots of things in 2022 if we focus on *Following Jesus* and living like John the Baptizer, Jesus' cousin, who lived in the 1st century.**
- ***John the Baptizer* was known for his unique message, mannerisms and ministry (Matthew 3:1-6), and he made a difference for good and for God in his day.**
- Jesus - *"Of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist."* (Matthew 11:11)
- ***What can we learn from the message and ministry of John the Baptizer that will help us to "make a difference" for good and for God in 2022?***

We Will Be Difference-makers In 2022 If We Are Focused On:

LIVING A COMMITTED LIFE

- ***"When he (John) saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize he denounced them. 'You brood of snakes!' he exclaimed. . . . Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God."*** (Matthew 3:7-8)
- **Lots of people profess to be followers of God, but the way they live disproves their claims.**
- **Living a "Committed Life" requires *Repenting Of Our Sins.***
 - ***What "bad" emotions, desires or habits have I allowed to hinder my life?***
 - ***"To repent" means to turn from our way of thinking and living to embrace God's way of thinking and living.***
 - Paul - *"I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."* (Acts 20:21 NIV)
- **Living a "Committed Life" requires *Turning To Our God.***
 - **When a person "turns to God" it means they are putting their faith in the Lord, and they are committing to loving Him and living for Him.**
 - Jesus - *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength."* (Mark 12:29-30)
- John the Baptizer - *"I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God."* (Matthew 3:11)

- People who really repent of their sins and turn their lives over to the Lord will want to be baptized by immersion, illustrating the Lord's cleansing work in their lives.
- *What steps have I taken or do I need to take to demonstrate that I've repented of my sins and turned to (or back to) the Lord?*

We Will Be Difference-makers In 2022 If We Are Focused On:

POINTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

- John the Baptizer - *"I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am - so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be His slave and carry His sandals."* (Matthew 3:11)
- **Christians who "make a difference" are those who care more about people loving and praising Jesus than they do about having others love and praise them.**
- **We need to point people to Jesus because *He Can Elevate Their Lives.***
 - John the Baptizer - *"He (Jesus) has come from above and is greater than anyone else. . . . He speaks God's words, for God gives Him the Spirit without limit. The Father loves His Son and has put everything into His hands."* (John 3:31, 34-35)
 - **When Jesus comes into a person's life He has the capacity to bring direction, freedom, healing, peace, strength and provision to their lives.**
 - Jesus - *"I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."* (John 8:12)
 - Jesus - *"If the Son sets you free, you are truly free."* (John 8:36)
 - *"They asked, 'Who healed you? What happened?' He (the formerly blind man) told them, 'The man they call Jesus . . .'"* (John 9:10-11)
 - Jesus - *"I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart."* (John 14:27)
 - Jesus - *"The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."* (John 10:10)
- **We need to point people to Jesus *He Can Give Them Eternal Life.***
 - **This life only lasts for a brief time so we need to help people get eternal life.**
 - John the Baptizer - *"Anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."* (John 3:35-36)
 - **Having "eternal life" means that when we leave this life we will spend the rest of eternity in Heaven serving and worshiping the Lord.**
- **We can point people to Jesus by living a godly life, ministering to them, sharing our faith and *faith story* with them, and inviting them to Life Groups and Services.**
- **We all need to write out our "faith story" and be prepared to share it with others.**
 - *What was my life like before receiving Jesus as my Savior?*
 - *What caused me to realize I needed help from Jesus in my life?*
 - *What steps did I take to begin or strengthen my relationship with Jesus?*
 - *How can Jesus change my attitude, ambitions, actions and relationships?*
- **Who are some people that I need to "point to Jesus" in 2022, and what are some steps I'm going to take to point them to Him?**

We Will Be Difference-makers In 2022 If We Are Focused On:

SURRENDERING TO GOD'S SPIRIT

- John the Baptizer - *"He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* (Matthew 3:11)
- **The Holy Spirit comes into our lives at the moment of salvation to lead us to be who God has called us to be and to do what God has called us to do.**
- **The Holy Spirit provides *Direction For Our Lives*.**
 - Jesus - *"When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth."* (John 16:13)
 - **The Holy Spirit gives us direction as He speaks to us in our mind and heart (Acts 8:27-29, 13:2).**
 - *"The true children of God are those who let God's Spirit lead them."* (Romans 8:14 NCV)
- **The Holy Spirit provides *Transformation To Our Lives*.**
 - *"Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. . . . The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* (Galatians 5:16, 22-23)
 - **The godly changes that take place in our lives after we commit our lives to Jesus are a result of the Holy Spirit transforming us.**
 - *"The Spirit makes us more and more like Jesus . . ."* (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- ***In what ways do I need for the Holy Spirit to direct or transform me in 2022?***

We Will Be Difference-makers In 2022 If We Are Focused On:

PURSUING OUR CALLING

- *"John the Baptist . . . began preaching. His message was, 'Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.' The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, 'He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for Him!"'* (Matthew 3:1-3)
- **The Lord has called us to fulfill *Our Mission In The World*.**
 - Jesus - *"Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you . . ."* (Matthew 28:19-20)
 - ***Who has the Lord called me to "disciple" in 2022?***
 - **We disciple others by spending time with them, modeling real Christianity to them, sharing with them what we've learned and training them.**
- **The Lord has called us to get involved in *A Ministry That Will Help Others*.**
 - *"God has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago."* (Ephesians 2:10)
 - **There are lots of places in the Church and in our Community where we can be involved in serving God and helping others with our time and talents.**
 - *"God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."* (1 Peter 4:10)
 - ***What Church ministries do I need to participate in in 2022?***

- *“Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk Him out of it. ‘I am the one who needs to be baptized by You,’ he said, ‘so why are You coming to me?’” But Jesus said, ‘It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.’ So John agreed to baptize Him.”* (Matthew 3:13-15)
- **Jesus was “water baptized” to: 1) identify with John the Baptizer’s ministry, 2) illuminate what happens when a person comes to God for salvation, and 3) illustrate that He had come to die for humankind's sins and salvation.**
- **Baptism by immersion indicates that: 1) we are determined to be a follower of Jesus, 2) we believe that God has forgiven our sins, 3) we want others to know that Jesus is the Savior and Lord of our lives.**
- *“After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My dearly loved Son, who brings Me great joy.’”* (Matthew 3:16-17)
- **When we take the steps we’ve learned about today - being baptized, living a committed life, pointing people to Jesus, surrendering to God’s Spirit and finding and fulfilling our calling - we will also bring joy to our Heavenly Father in 2022.**
- ***Which of the above steps do I need to work on in the beginning of 2021?”***