

John Chapter 1

the first and most impressive missionary in history of the world is the main focus of John's Gospel—one who leaves the comfort and splendor of a place we can't even comprehend to go to a place that will not honor him and a group of people who already have a track record for rejecting his message.

That missionary is Jesus. Jesus leaves the right hand of the Father to enter humanity as a baby. Knowing the pain and suffering he will endure, he comes anyway. Jesus takes on flesh to live alongside humans and experience human pain and loss, be tempted as all humans are tempted and be an example of perfection for generations to see. Then, ultimately, he comes to pay the ultimate price for our failures.

It's interesting to note that Jesus is born into this world with very few people recognizing who he is and he is here for about thirty years before he starts making himself known. Thirty years! He experiences life as a human for thirty years before he walks out to meet John the Baptist at the Jordan River.

Have you ever felt like you aren't making a difference in this world? Have you ever felt like you're not living up to whatever it is God has planned for you? Next time that thought comes into your head, think about what it must have been like for Jesus during that thirty years. Just waiting for his time.

And, when his time does finally come, it's John the Baptist's mission to help people recognize who he is. John the Baptist, an ordinary man who lives a noticeably different life. It's his job to show people who Jesus is.

And he does. He recognizes Jesus as soon as he sees him coming. And he shifts the focus of all those people who have come out to see what he is doing by the river. They're all there to listen to John's words and to receive the baptism John has to offer. But as soon as Jesus arrives, John completely shifts direction.

You are like John the Baptist, but don't take that the wrong way. People think that if they want to be like John the Baptist, they have to be angry and condemn people—the crazy guy on the street corner with the giant sign and the scowl on his face. That guy must be like John the Baptist, because he is calling out everybody's sins.

However, that is not what I am talking about when I say you are like John the Baptist. What makes you like John the Baptist is that you have the same mission of helping people recognize who Jesus is. Your job is to point to Jesus in everything you do. When you get praise, that praise should glorify Jesus in some way and that doesn't just mean you say, "Praise Jesus!" a lot. It means the things you do actually glorify him and help people see him more clearly.

You should take this mission so seriously that you're willing to send people away from you in order to better follow Jesus. This can be hard to grasp, but it's exactly what John the Baptist does.

John has disciples. He has people who hang on every word he says, people who want to be part of what he is doing. They respect him and they want to learn from him. Then

, when Jesus comes along, John tells some of those disciples to go with Jesus and follow him instead.

You see, John doesn't care that this means he will have a smaller following. That's not the point. The point of everything he is doing is to help people see Jesus. And, once they truly see him, they're better off moving on and following him.

Don't get too caught up in growing a following. Your job is to point people to Jesus. And, you have to let God decide how that can be best accomplished.

Do you lead a Bible study or a small group? Fantastic. But, don't take it personally when members of that group decide to move on to another group.

Are you helping one person learn about Jesus and draw closer to him? Wonderful. But, make sure you are humble enough to allow that person to receive guidance from someone else too. Remember, it isn't about you.

If people moved on, it doesn't mean that one person or group is better at helping people follow Jesus. It simply means people will thrive in different environments during different phases of their spiritual journeys. Remember that not all of John's disciples left him, only some. Others stay and continue to follow him a while longer.

Those disciples who decide to follow Jesus do more than just change their allegiance. Not only do they commit to traveling with Jesus, but they also invite their friends and family members to do the same. Andrew runs to get his brother, Simon, and brings him along. Philip finds his friend Nathaniel, who he knows will want to be a part of this.

Jesus' new disciples already understand a key part of a thriving community. It isn't good enough to just follow Jesus on your own. It's important to be in community and help others do the same. Without even knowing much about Jesus, these men already recognize that they want those close to them to be there too. And they act on that knowledge. Just like you should.

Jesus immediately connects with his new disciples. He knows who Simon is, and he gives him the nickname Cephas (or Peter). And he knows what is going on in their heads. Jesus calls Nathaniel out on his "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" statement. Then, to let Nathaniel know he doesn't hold it against him, he commends him for being without deceit.

How much do you actually know about the people you want to bring closer to Jesus? How much do you really care about them? Are these people that you love? Are you seeking what's best for them, the things that will help them flourish and grow as Christ followers, or are they just projects to you? Do you want to know them, or are you more concerned with accomplishing a goal?

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