

## Poolside Devotion

Dan Nelson

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

As the bright sun beat down upon their skin, the heat was tempered with a gentle breeze that would blow across the land from time to time. The pathway had been well traveled for weeks as parades of people found their way to the same remote destination. Desperation was overcome by determination to experience what so many were talking about. Rocky hillsides transformed into lush greenery as one approached the banks of the river and suddenly, loneliness disappeared as the crowd enveloped all around. Then, there he was, standing waist-deep in the water proclaiming words that penetrated the soul. One by one they went to him and returned radiant, joyful, and free. They had encountered John; the baptizer.

It seems that this infamous figure in history can be counted among the many that have found themselves misunderstood. His dress and eating habits were a bit out of vogue for his generation although he may be lauded today for his bold statement in fashion and ultra-natural, all organic food choices. Jesus said John was the most blessed among men but even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than he. Although His life is recorded at the beginning of the New Testament, he was actually the last of the Old Testament prophets. The biblical account chronicles his miraculous conception and John's touch with the Holy Spirit since before he was born. When he started His ministry, it seemed that he would be the new mega-church preaching dynamo. Only God knew it would end so abruptly with his head on a platter as a gift.

There are two parts to John the Baptist's life that I want to reflect on with you today. First, the phenomenal experience that He was called to do one day when His ministry took on new form. Jesus had come to the Jordan River to be baptized. At first John refused, for he seems to be the only one that knew who this actually was. But the command required John to do as instructed in order to fulfill all righteousness. This is a mystery to many people who can't figure out what Jesus meant. Others however, understand the principle of leadership that Jesus lived: credible servant leadership by example. Jesus led and told others to follow him. If he was to command his new followers to be baptized, they could model their attitude and behavior after Jesus himself, for doing what you ask others to do is the "right" thing to do.

The other area I want to look at is John's confusion due to false expectations that produced disappointments in Jesus. When John got word that Jesus' behavior was different than expected, he began to question

things. He sent the message inquiring, "Are you the one or should we look for another?" The answer Jesus gave put the challenge back to John. "Go back and tell John what I am saying and doing." Translation: My life bears witness with the work I have been called to do. Wrong expectations produce inaccurate conclusions. Look no further. I am the Savior in whom you once trusted. Stay faithful to what you know is true.

Often the most profound truths are the simple ones. Holding fast to what you know is true even when there are other things that you cannot apprehend is an honest lesson in faith. This past Sunday, the clouds parted and the sunshine poured down upon a glistening backyard swimming pool where we held a baptism for those answering the call; among them was my own daughter Kareenna. This time I was the one standing in the water speaking to those standing nearby, echoing the message. As each one came in to join me, there was a sense of awe and wonder at what experiences a life of obedience to Christ might entail: how a God of ultimate power and majesty would relate with one who loves Him enough to accept His invitation. And now, it's your turn. John answered His call and he is listed among the greats. Your name could be there also. What has God called you to do? If your life is not on the fast track of adventure, chances are you haven't yet started. There is no better time than right now to respond to the voice that beckons "Follow Me!"

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](http://OjaiValleyNewsArticles)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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### Sunday Worship:

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

### Mid-Week Study:

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View