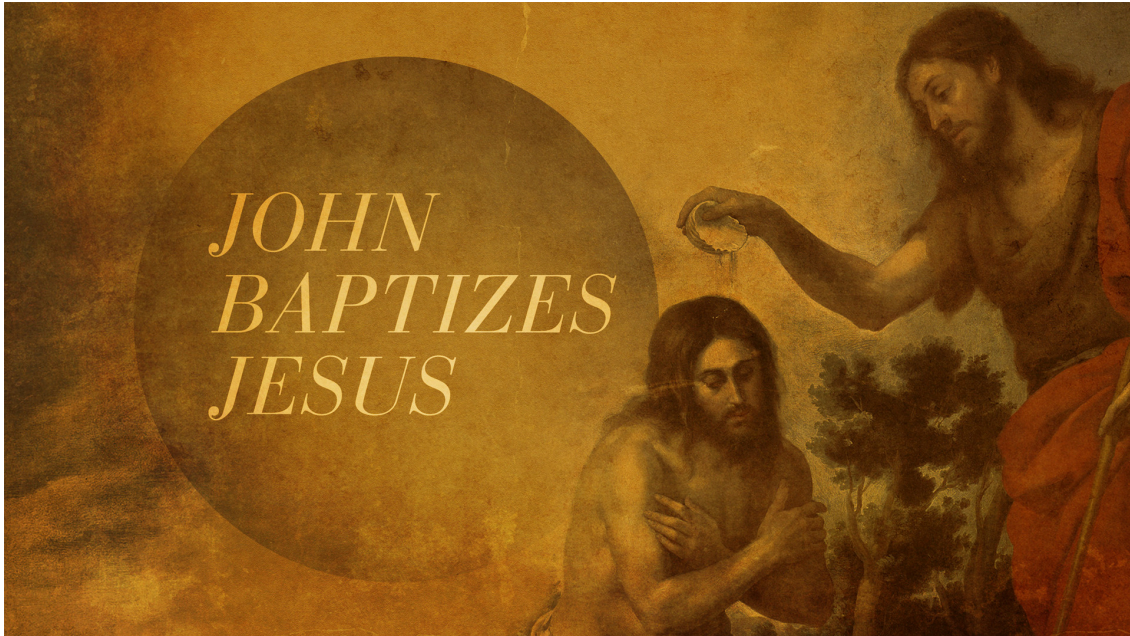


WEEK OF JANUARY 11, 2026

**5-Day Devotional
based on Sunday's message:**



JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS
Matthew 3:13-17

Provided by



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Matthew 3:13-17

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. 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.”

Day 1: When God Shows Up Differently

Devotional

Have you ever planned something perfectly, only to have it unfold completely differently than expected? Maybe you mapped out your career path, but doors kept closing. Perhaps you prayed for healing in a specific way, but God had another plan. Life has a way of surprising us, and so does God. When Jesus began His public ministry, everyone expected the Messiah to arrive with royal fanfare from Jerusalem, emerging from the Temple with trumpets and armies. Instead, Jesus came alone from Galilee and walked quietly to the Jordan River. No entourage, no announcement, no spectacle. Just a humble man stepping into the water with ordinary people who needed forgiveness. This wasn't how anyone imagined the Savior would begin His mission. Yet, this unexpected approach reveals something beautiful about God's character. It reveals that He meets us where we are, not where we think He should be. He doesn't always work through the impressive or obvious channels we expect. Perhaps you're in a season where God seems absent or His methods confusing. Maybe you're wondering why He hasn't answered your prayers the way you hoped, or why His timing feels so different from yours. Take heart. God's unexpected ways often lead to His most beautiful work. His kingdom doesn't always arrive with spectacle. Sometimes it arrives through quiet faithfulness and humble obedience. When God shows up differently than you expected, don't lose hope. He's still working, still present, still good. His ways may surprise you, but His love for you never changes.

Bible Verse

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." - Isaiah 55:8-9

Reflection Question

In what area of your life have you been expecting God to work in a specific way? How might you need to open your heart to His unexpected methods?

Quote

What do you do when God shows up differently in your life than you had expected?

Prayer

Lord, help me trust Your ways even when they don't match my expectations. Give me eyes to see Your work in the unexpected places and patience to wait for Your perfect timing. Amen.

Day 2: When Faithful People Struggle

Devotional

Even the most faithful people sometimes struggle to understand God's ways. John the Baptist had spent his entire life preparing for the Messiah's arrival, yet when Jesus came to be baptized, John hesitated. He knew who Jesus was, the sinless Son of God, and couldn't understand why Jesus would need baptism, a symbol of repentance from sin. John's confusion wasn't due to lack of faith. It came from a heart that couldn't yet see how God's plan made sense. Sometimes the most devoted followers of Christ find themselves in similar places, wrestling with God's methods even while trusting His heart. Maybe you're there right now. You love God deeply, you've served Him faithfully, yet His current work in your life feels upside down. Perhaps He's asking you to wait when you want to move forward, or to step out when you'd rather stay safe. Like John, you might be thinking, 'This doesn't make sense, God. Shouldn't it work differently?' It's okay to struggle with understanding while still choosing obedience. John ultimately consented to baptize Jesus, even though he didn't fully grasp the purpose. Sometimes our faith journey requires us to act in obedience before understanding arrives. God doesn't expect you to have all the answers before you follow Him. He simply asks for your trust and willingness to obey, even when His ways seem backwards. Your struggle with understanding doesn't disqualify your faith, but often deepens it.

Bible Verse

'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?"' - Matthew 3:14

Reflection Question

Where in your life is God asking for obedience before understanding? How can you take that next step of faith?

Quote

Even faithful servants of God, can struggle when God works in unexpected ways.

Prayer

Lord, when Your ways confuse me, help me remember Your faithfulness. Give me courage to obey even when I don't understand, trusting that Your plans are always good. Amen.

Day 3: The Humble Beginning

Devotional

Some of life's most significant moments happen quietly. A baby's first breath, a whispered 'I love you,' a decision to forgive. These aren't accompanied by fireworks, yet they change everything. God often works the same way, beginning His greatest works in the most humble circumstances. Jesus could have started His ministry from a palace throne, commanding attention and demanding respect. Instead, He chose to step down into the muddy waters of the Jordan River, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with tax collectors, prostitutes, and ordinary people seeking forgiveness. The Creator of the universe chose to begin His earthly mission not above the crowd, but among them. This wasn't weakness, but intentional love. Jesus didn't come to save us from a distance. He entered fully into our human condition. He experienced our struggles, felt our pain, and understood our need for grace because He chose to be with us rather than above us. Maybe you're feeling overlooked or insignificant today. Perhaps your circumstances seem too ordinary for God to use, or your background too humble for Him to notice. Remember that God's greatest work often begins quietly and humbly. He doesn't need impressive credentials or perfect conditions to accomplish His purposes through you. The same Jesus who stepped into ordinary water to begin extraordinary ministry is the same Jesus who steps into your ordinary life to do extraordinary things. Your humble beginning might just be the perfect starting point for God's amazing work.

Bible Verse

'But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him.' - Matthew 3:15

Reflection Question

What 'humble beginning' in your life might God be wanting to use as the foundation for something greater?

Quote

God's greatest work often begins quietly. It begins humbly, and it begins obedience to God's direction in our lives.

Prayer

Father, thank You for meeting me in my ordinary circumstances. Help me see the potential You see in my humble beginnings and trust You to do extraordinary things through my simple obedience. Amen.

Day 4: Standing With Us

Devotional

Love doesn't just observe from a distance, but gets involved. When someone you care about is struggling, you don't just send encouraging texts. You show up. You sit with them, cry with them, and walk through the difficulty together. This is exactly what Jesus did at His baptism. Jesus didn't need baptism for Himself. He had no sin to confess, no guilt to wash away. Yet, He insisted on being baptized because He wanted to stand with us in our need for forgiveness. He could have called sinners to repent from the throne room of heaven, but instead, He came down to stand in the water with them. This act of solidarity reveals the heart of our Savior. He doesn't save us from a comfortable distance. He enters fully into our human experience. When we face temptation, He understands because He was tempted. When we feel abandoned, He knows that pain because He experienced it on the cross. When we struggle with doubt or fear, He gets it because He lived it. Whatever you're facing today, whether it's guilt, shame, loneliness, or fear, remember that Jesus chose to experience it with you. He didn't remain safely above our struggles; He stepped down into them. You're not walking through your challenges alone because the Son of God chose to walk the same path. His presence with you in the difficult moments isn't just comfort, but transformation. When Jesus stands with us in our need, He doesn't leave us unchanged. His presence brings hope, healing, and the promise that our story isn't over. In this moment, God is not distanced or divided. Father, Son, and Spirit are present together, revealing a God who draws near to redeem.

Bible Verse

'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

Reflection Question

How does knowing that Jesus chose to stand with you in your struggles change the way you view your current challenges?

Quote

He could have called us to repent from the throne room of Heaven. But what does he do? He comes into our world just like one of us.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for not staying distant from my struggles but choosing to experience them with me. Help me find comfort and strength in Your presence during difficult times. Amen.

Day 5: Heaven's Response to Faithfulness

Devotional

Sometimes the most powerful moments happen after the most ordinary acts of obedience. When Jesus emerged from the Jordan River, after this simple, humble act of baptism, heaven responded dramatically. The heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father's voice declared His love and pleasure in His Son. This wasn't just a nice moment. It was a divine affirmation that faithfulness matters to God. Jesus had just demonstrated perfect obedience by submitting to baptism, even though He didn't need it personally. His willingness to follow the Father's plan, regardless of how it looked to others, brought heaven's approval. The same principle applies to your life. When you choose obedience over convenience, when you trust God's timing over your own agenda, when you surrender your plans to His purposes, heaven takes notice. Your faithful acts of obedience, even the small ones that no one else sees, matter deeply to your heavenly Father. Maybe you've been faithfully serving in a role that feels insignificant, or patiently waiting for God's direction when you'd rather force your own timeline. Perhaps you've been choosing forgiveness when you'd rather hold grudges, or giving generously when you'd rather keep everything for yourself. These acts of faithfulness don't go unnoticed. God sees your obedience, and He is pleased. Just as the Father declared His love and pleasure over Jesus, He delights in your willingness to trust and follow Him. Your faithfulness today is preparing you for the powerful work God wants to do through your life tomorrow.

Bible Verse

'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

Reflection Question

What act of faithfulness is God calling you to today? How might your obedience open the door for His powerful work in your life?

Quote

The kingdom does not arrive with spectacle. The kingdom arrives with Jesus faithfulness to his Father.

Prayer

Father, help me be faithful in the small things, trusting that You see and value my obedience. May my willingness to follow You bring You pleasure and open my heart to experience Your power. Amen.