

## **SHIFT!**

Vision 2.0 Comes Alive  
Where Do We Begin...  
John 1:1-12  
January 7, 2018

Today is the first Sunday of a new year – welcome to 2018. 2017 is gone and the grand entrance of 2018 is just 7 days old. The awesome thing about the start of a new year is – the chance to start something new or to fix something that got broken over the past year(s) or to make a life altering decision that will bring happiness or peace or joy to your life. Today could be the first day of the rest of your life and you have the chance to have A NEW BEGINNING. I don't have to tell you that this chance doesn't come along every day. There are only a few times in life when this kind of thing happens like: when you get fired or laid off, when you get married, when you have a child, when you graduate, or maybe when you recover from a traumatic health issue. I don't know what 2017 was like for you...for us here at CrossPoint Church 2017 was a...well, let's call it a challenging year. And I for one and really looking forward to seeing what God is going to do with our campuses and congregations in 2018.

Maybe you're looking to see what God is going to do in your life this year. Maybe you're excited about what might happen in a relationship, maybe it's a job prospect, maybe it's a graduation that's coming this year, or maybe it's trip you're taking this year that you've had on your bucket list for a long time. Whatever this year might bring, all the good things and yes, even all the heartbreaking and life altering things, there are somethings we can do as we start the year that will help us stay in touch with the faith we have in a God who loves us. This is a good time of the year to make new beginnings happen and we're thinking that this is a good time to start a spiritual life commitment that will help you navigate through what ever comes your way in 2018.

So, let's start by looking at a passage in scripture that talks about new beginnings. Turn with me to the Gospel of John in the New Testament. This is a very different Gospel compared to the other three gospels...Matthew, Mark and Luke. The three of them are a lot like each other but, John writes his message about the life of Jesus like it's a love story: God's love for us, Jesus' love for all creation, Jesus' love for John and the other disciples, and Jesus' love for us. So, let's listen to John, chapter one.

[Read John 1:1-12]

I want to take a few minutes and look at this passage because all our new beginnings, as important as they are to us, have their start in something much greater than ourselves. And if we listen to our hearts call for meaning and for something deeper and more profound than just figuring out how much weight we want to lose this year or whether this is the year we meet Mr. or Mrs. right, or if that gym membership will still be happening come April...then I believe that we can pick up some important life lessons in this passage.

The first thing we learn is that the One who gives us eternal life was the same one who was there when all life started. This guy named John knew something that is important for all of us to remember. John reminds us that we are not just a random, passing thought, but each of us are part of the well-planned creation of a God who thought about you long before you were born. From the very start, God has known the person you would become. Before the beginning of your creation He knew about the mistakes, failures, the downs and outs, successes and accomplishments, highs and lows. God even knew about your doubts and fears about Him. Yet, in the middle of all our shortcomings, God believed from the very beginning that you and I were worth it because of who he made you to be. Jesus decided from the very beginning of all things that He would give everything He had for you already knowing you would waiver in your support and belief of Him.

He knew you from the start and despite your mess, He made you just the way you are. And what does God ask for in return...that we would love Him and live our lives according to His teaching as best as we possibly can. And while none of us are perfect, Jesus thinks pretty highly of us and believes that we can improve on where we were last year. He believes it so much that He challenges us to keep getting better. Like a coach

who believes that we can do one more lap or believes that we can push ourselves just a little harder. Jesus is like a parent who wants to see us become what is possible. **Jesus gives us his all and invites us to do the same.** Jesus believes in you and has believed in you from the very beginning. He was there at the beginning of time, He was there at your beginning, and He's here, at this new beginning. And what He has always hoped for is that you would live like you know He's there.

Oh, and look at verse four...is says: <sup>4</sup> *The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.* There are two words there that I don't want you to miss...everything and everyone. The light of God that came shining into the world through Jesus Christ, the light of hope, the light of peace, the light of salvation, the light to guide our way is for everything and who (everyone)? Right, everyone. That means its for you. Maybe you thought that God stopped caring. Maybe you thought God was distant. Maybe you thought that your prayers were hitting the ceiling and bouncing back to earth. Maybe you even thought that this God thing may not be real. But, the promise of God from the very beginning is that the Light is for everyone. No more darkness, no more wandering, no more stumbling to find our way.

And Jesus promises that He will not leave us to do it on our own. The presence of the Spirit of God gives us what we need to keep any promise we make to Him this morning. You are not left to figure this out on your own. The **God** who wants to have more than a distant relationship with us **is doing everything to deepen our relationship with Him.** So, as we start out this new year, I want us to begin thinking about how we might want to ramp up our commitment to knowing Jesus better in 2018 and how you can make a conscious decision to be more like Jesus at the end of this year than you are right now.

Jesus' promise is that His light will shine into each one of us. What He is hoping is that we refine our lives, that we better our lives in such a way that we can reflect that light back out into the world around us. Go to verses six, seven and eight with me a moment and see what it says: <sup>6</sup> *God sent a man, John the Baptist,* <sup>7</sup> *to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.* <sup>8</sup> *John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.* God is in the practice of sending people into the world to shine the light of Christ. It's been happening since Adam and Eve and it's happening again this morning. God is calling us to carry the light. Notice in verse eight that we are not the light...we are carriers, vessels of the light. What God wants us to do is to reflect that light as best we can into 2018.

The world desperately need to see the light of Jesus shining doesn't it? Jesus is hoping that you will reflect His light into the dark places around you so that people will see and know that God is real, and that God loves them. The best way for you to reflect the light is to know the light. You can't reflect something that you don't let in and don't know very well. Our job is to continually refine our ability to reflect the light. Like a craftsman cuts and polishes a diamond so that it will reflect the light that is shining through it, we are called to keep refining our lives.

So, how can we do that? I believe that there are a few things you can decide to do starting today that will make a huge difference in 2018 and that will have lasting effects on the rest of your life. If we are going to make Jesus known in our own lives and then all Him to shine out from our lives into the rest of the world we are going to need to do some things on purpose. We don't get there by doing nothing or we'd all be there, right.

So, the first thing we need to do is decide to shift into a place of doing something. The decision to do something is the place we all need to start. That means you need to decide that this is important. We all need to ask the important question...is this important, is it important enough for me to do something about it, is it important for me to make this shift? Will I decide today to do something that will advance my relationship with Jesus in such a way that I can know Him better and that the world I live in can see Him in my actions? Do I believe today so deeply in this Jesus who came to die for me so that I might live for Him that I will decide to do something starting today.

The second thing to do is to **pray about** just **what** it is that **God wants you to do.** We are all different and God knows that...oh how God must know that. So, God doesn't have a cookie cutter program that we all have

to fit into. Isn't that awesome? You don't have to do your spiritual life the same way anyone else does their spiritual life. So, what are you supposed to do? I believe that if you talk with God, that God will give you some guidance and direction. Now, don't get too overly analytical about this. God most likely is not going to show up with a billboard for you on the way to work tomorrow and show you what He wants you to do. Most likely its going to be in the still small voice that comes in our times of quiet with God. God may say that you are to read more, or do more mission work, or speak more, or pray more. What ever it is, let God decide because if God calls you to it God will support you in it.

Next, **commit to** a couple of **key spiritual life practices**. You're doing one right now...**worship**. Commit to worshipping on a regular basis. Here's what we all know, the more you get out of the habit the harder it is to get back on track. That's true with almost everything in live and it's true with worship. So, commit to a regular schedule all year long. Not just when it's convenient or when you feel like. As a matter of fact, it might actually be best when you don't feel like it. God sometimes come shining in brilliant ways when we least expect of feel like it.

But, don't stop there. The next thing we all need to do is to **read the Bible daily**. If we are going to reflect the light of Christ, then we might want to get to know the author of the light and what was said and written by Him through these 66 books that make up the Bible. Getting into this book everyday makes a difference in how you live your life. You will discover things about yourself, about others, about how people have been forever, about how God operates, and about how much God loves us all. If you've never read the Bible before, the best place to start is the Gospel of John. And look, we already got you started with today's reading – how's that!

Okay, here's another thing you can do...**join a LifeGroup** and get into the Bible with a group of people who are walking through it with you. You don't need to be super spiritual of some really outgoing person. Groups are how we believe we all grow. I've been in a LifeGroup of some kind for over twenty-five years and it's made all the difference in my spiritual life. This is not a scary thing...it's just doing life with other people who are on the journey with the rest of us.

Oh, and there's one more thing...give! **Give your life away**. There is a godly principle that I believe in that I want to tell you about...you cannot out give God. By giving your life away to the things of God, God continues to bless you so that you'll give more. Now, I'm not talking about money as the only way to give. As a matter of fact, some of us won't give like we should until we know what giving looks like. That means go we should all go on a mission trip to somewhere we can give our lives to others. When we do, the message of Jesus inside of us become a reality, right in front of us and we come face to face with the Jesus in someone else that will change your life forever.

So, as we get ready to come forward for communion, I want to first ask you to think through these steps...will you decide, will you pray, will you dive in, will you join, will you give?