

# A Reed Shaken by the Wind

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[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

Recorded in Matthew 11, Jesus spoke of John the Baptist saying:

“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,  
Who will prepare Your Way before You.’

“Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:7-11)

Jesus asked the crowds what they expected to see when they went out in the wilderness to see John. Did they expect to see “a reed shaken by the wind”? The metaphor of a reed shaken by the wind refers to one who is swayed by every wind of doctrine or by every wind of popular thinking embraced by the world.

No, John the Baptist was not such a man. He was one who was thoroughly dedicated to God and His Word (John 1:1, 14) and to the assignment that had been given to him to announce the coming of the Messiah, to prepare His way before Him. And John’s dedication to God and His Word is certainly an example for every believer.

The Apostle John exhorted believers not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, and he said further that if anyone does love the world, the

love of the Father is not in Him (1 John 2:15). In other words, those who love the world, and the things that are in the world, are in fact unregenerate.

The Apostle Paul exhorted believers not to be conformed to the world and the world's way of thinking, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we will be able to know and understand what the will of God is (Romans 12:2). And the way that we become transformed by renewing our minds is by meditating on God's word regularly, by feeding on the word of God. (Consider John 6:41-55, Psalm 1:1-3.)

In the letter to the Ephesians, speaking of some of the spiritual gifts that God has given to believers for the benefit and edification of the entire body of Christ, Paul wrote:

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ***As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine...*** (Ephesians 4:11-14, emphasis added.)

Paul was teaching that we are not to be swayed by the world's way of thinking or by the machinations of false teachers who will twist the Scriptures for what they think will be their own personal profit (1 Timothy 6:3-5) but will ultimately be to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16). We are not to be conformed to the ways, thinking, and valuations of this world.

On the contrary, we are to be firmly grounded in the truth of God's word. We are to present ourselves as “living sacrifices” to Him, not loving the world and not holding in high regard the things that are in the world, because the things that are highly esteemed among men of this world are an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15, 1 John 2:16).

Paul had this prayer for believers as recorded in his letter to the Philippians: “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ” (Philippians 1-9-10).

And so we see yet again from the Scriptures that it is God's will for every believer that we grow and mature in our knowledge and understanding of the word

of God so we may be able to discern between truth and error and not be “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine”. We are not to be as a reed shaken by the wind, but rather as John the Baptist was: one who was thoroughly dedicated to Jesus Christ and His word and one who did not love the world or the things that are in this world.