Introduction

The man and the gospel he wrote

There are no more controversial books in the bible than the 4 gospels; and the most controversial is the Gospel According to John, the subject of this study. It is radically different in its approach and its content of the life of Jesus than the others gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (commonly called the ‘synoptic’ gospel, which literally means ‘seeing with the same eyes’). John contains the most unique material and the most theologically dense material of the four gospels. It is also an intensely personal gospel, as we get a glimpse of Jesus the God-man much more intimately than the other three gospels.

Like the other gospels, John was written anonymously and the attachment of John as the author comes from both internal and external evidence. Internal evidence for John’s authorship is seen by: 1) personal witness of the events (John 19:35); 2) intimate knowledge of Jesus’ interactions with the disciples (John 6:5-7; 12:2-1; 13:3-6; 14:5,8,22); 3) insight into Jesus’ thoughts (John 6:6,61,64; 18:4);4) the author being a Palestinian Jew who had first-hand knowledge of Jerusalem and the surrounding country as described throughout the book; and 5) the closing of the gospel telling of the interaction of Jesus with “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20). These internal evidences can point only to the inner circle of Jesus, namely, Peter, James, or John. Peter is ruled out because he is referred to constantly in the third person. James is ruled out because he was martyred prior to AD44 (Acts 12:2) which was well before the book was written (typically dated at AD85). So by process of elimination, we end up with John (known as “the evangelist”). External evidence also points to John’s authorship, as the earliest traditions of the church claimed John as the scribe. Iraneous bishop of Lyons (c. 180), Theophilus of Antioch (c. 165), Clement of Alexandria (c. 220), and the 4th Century historian Eusebius all credited John as the author.

We are first introduced to John in Mark 1:19 as Jesus is calling his first disciples. His father was Zebedee, and his brother James was also one of the first disciples. John is typically viewed as a young, gentle, maybe even effeminate man famously known for being the disciple that Jesus loved and leaning on Jesus, as mentioned in John 21:20. When in actuality, John and his brother James were a couple of testosterone-filled hotheads nicknamed the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) who wanted to call fire down on a town that wouldn’t listen to Jesus (Luke 9:51-56)! It would seem that John and his brother came by their personalities honestly, as it was their mother who asked Jesus if her sons could alongside Jesus (Matthew 20:20-28), and John and his brother were all for the idea.

But we get the best picture of John as we read his writings. John penned a total of 5 books of the Bible: The Gospel According to John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation. All of these books were written toward the end of John’s life. As mentioned earlier, his Gospel is generally believed to have been written around AD85, with his other writings following over the next decade (Revelation is believed to have been written no later that AD96 while John was
imprisoned on the island of Patmos). In John’s writings, we still see his zeal and passion that his nickname “Son of Thunder” would imply, but this passion has been redirected away from calling judgment down from heaven and ruling alongside Jesus to an intense love for Jesus and the people of Jesus’ Church. We will see in John’s Gospel that he is a deep theologian, but that his theology is fueled by a deep love for his Savior and Lord. This is a great example to us, as Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 13 to let love be the motivator for everything we do, lest all our words, knowledge, and theology be a noisy, clanging cymbal.

The Gospel of John can be broken down into 4 simple parts: 1) The Prologue (1:1-18); 2) Jesus’ Ministry (1:19-11:57); 3) The Passion Week (12:1-20:29); and 4) The Epilogue (20:30-21:25). Additionally, we see John making a pretty big deal about the number “7”. The number 7 is traditionally viewed as a number of completeness or perfection. In the Gospel of John, there are 2 main sets of “7” to pay attention to: Jesus’ 7 Miracles (2:1-12; 4:43-54; 5:1-47; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9:1-41; and 11:1-57) and Jesus’ 7 “I Am” Statements (6:35,51; 8:12; 10:7,9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1). Keeping these general breakdowns of John’s Gospel in mind will help your reading and studying of The Gospel of John.

John’s purpose in writing this Gospel is made very clear in John 20:31 “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John’s desire was to see people come to faith in Jesus, and that those who are saved will live a full life as God intended (cf. John 10:10). It is imperative to understand that being a Christ-follower is much more than some decision or understanding of biblical principles, but that being a Christ-follower is about a joy-filled life we live that is saturated with the worship of Jesus and service to others.

How to use this study guide

This study guide is designed to be a complementary learning tool that will correspond to the sermon series “God on Mission: The Gospel of John”. You may choose to use this study guide for your personal devotional time or as part of your study and discussion for your community group experience, or both! Since it is designed to complement the sermon series, it is highly encouraged that you listen to the sermons, take notes, and incorporate them into this study. If you miss any sermons on a Sunday morning, you will be able to download the audio from the Delta Church website (www.deltachurch.net). Each study in this guide will be broken down as follows:

- An overview of the passage, giving you a broad brushstroke of what’s being communicated

- The key text (verse) of the particular passage that is encouraged to be memorized that week

- The primary theological emphasis of the passage; basically, what the passage is teaching us about God
• 3-4 questions to think about and interact with

• A key missional emphasis on how to live, serve, and share the Gospel with others

• A prayer emphasis that will encourage your adoration, confession, or supplication to Jesus...and remember, prayer is about talking and listening to God!

It is my prayer that this study guide will be a blessing to you both personally and corporately. I look forward to diving headfirst into The Gospel of John with you to take a good long look at the life of Jesus and discover how we can deepen our belief and love for our great Savior & Leader. If at any time you have a question or a thought, please don’t hesitate to contact me so we can learn together!

Grace+Peace to you on your journey,

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Study #1 – Mission: Incarnation  John 1:1-18

Overview

The first 18 verses of John are some of the most glorious verses in all of scripture! We could spend the rest of our lives on these verses; they are so rich and deep. The main thrust of this passage is to show the eternal greatness of Jesus. There are obvious parallels with Genesis 1 both in the phrase “In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1). John immediately paints for us a picture of the deity of Christ, showing him as equal with God the Father and as Creator.

We also see both the transcendence and the imminence of God in this passage. Jesus is bigger than we could ever imagine, yet he is closer than we could ever understand. It is a wonderful combination of glory and grace!

We are also introduced to John the Baptizer, whom we will take a closer look at in the next study. John the Baptizer was given the privilege as the herald, or forerunner, of Jesus who clearly understood his position in relation to Christ (1:15).

Generally, this passage can be broken up as follows: The Greatness of Christ (v. 1-3); the Greatness of Christ’s Light (v. 4-13); and the Greatness of Christ’s Grace (v. 14-18). It’s all about His Greatness!

Key Text to Memorize

John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Theology to know

Logos. “Logos” is Greek for ‘Word’; here referring to Jesus himself. There are three main thrusts in Jesus as the ‘Word’: 1) John 1:1-3 shows Jesus as eternal, as Creator, and as equal with God; 2) “Logos” implies that there is a message to be shared (namely the Gospel of Jesus); and 3) given John’s frequent quotes and allusions to the Old Testament (which we’ll begin to see) he ties in the previous two thrusts as God created through his word (Genesis 1:3ff) and spoke to and through his Prophets (Isaiah 7:3; Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 1:6) by his word (Hebrew, dabar).

Zoe. “Zoe” is Greek for ‘Life’. This is also a key factor for the Fourth Gospel. We see Jesus living – he walks, talks, gets frustrated & angry, cries, mourns, etc. And as Jesus came to live the life that God desires and empowers us to do through His Spirit, we see that being a Christ-follower is much more about the lifestyle we live rather than a decision we make or belief we say we have (cf. John 20:31 & James 1:22; 2:20).
**Incarnation.** Christianity is unique because it is the only religion where our God came down from heaven to embody himself as man (John 1:14; Philippians 2:1-11). Because of Jesus was not born of man (he had no earthly father), Jesus was born without a sin nature, which is passed on through the father (Romans 5:12) and was therefore the only One able to be the unblemished sacrificial Lamb who could take away our sin (John 1:29).

**Questions to think about and discuss**

1. What are the practical implications of Jesus being the “Word”? How does this affect one’s view on creation?

2. Do you view your Christianity as a decision that you made at some point in your past, or as a way of living? What does this understanding of being a Christ-follower mean to you?

3. John 1:12 makes a point in saying we “receive” Jesus. How does this differ from the common term of “accepting” Jesus as Savior?

4. Why is the incarnation so important?

5. What is the best way to truly get to know the character of God (see John 1:18)?

**Living on Mission**

The ‘Word’ is to be both verbally shared and practically lived out. Who are some people that God has put in your life to speak and live the Gospel to?

**Prayer Emphasis**

Meditate on John 1:16. Reflect on all the ways Jesus has shown you grace. Praise him for being the Eternal God who came to earth and has shown you tremendous grace!
Study #2 – Mission: Prepare John 1:19-34

Overview

We are introduced to John the Baptist in this passage. A more appropriate title for John would be “The Baptizer” instead of “Baptist” (there were no denominations then!). John was a relative of Jesus, perhaps his cousin, as John’s mother Elizabeth and Jesus’ mother Mary were related (Luke 1:5-45). John was chosen by God to be the first prophet Israel had seen in 400 years whose call was to prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah (Luke 1:16-17; John 1:23).

John was very clear in knowing and proclaiming that he was not the Christ, but only the forerunner of the Christ. As bold as John was in his message, he was a very humble man before the Lord. It was this balanced mix of calling, self-awareness, boldness, and humbleness that led Jesus to dub John the greatest man ever born (Luke 7:28).

We are also introduced to some key groups of people. First, we meet the Jews. In this passage, it is practical to think that John’s use of the term “Jews” is not referring to the entire people group, but rather the religious establishment in Jerusalem – either the Sanhedrin (70 ‘elders’ who acted as a kind of Supreme Court in Jerusalem, with the high priest being an ex officio member that sat in a presidential-type of position) or perhaps the temple authorities. Secondly, we meet the priests and Levites. Their primary concern was theological purity and the administration of the rituals and service of the temple. Lastly, in verse 24, we meet the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a religious class that rose to power during the “400 Silent Years” from the time of Malachi until the time of John the Baptist. They were strict traditionalists who found pleasure in making sure every letter of the Law was followed, valuing outward religiosity over honest faith. It was the Pharisees that Jesus would speak most vehemently against (Matthew 15:1-9; Matthew 23).

Although John 1:29-34 doesn’t go into detail about Jesus’ baptism, we see from looking at the other Gospel accounts that this was the time when Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22). Until this time, it was unknown to John who the Messiah was (even though Jesus was his relative!). When Jesus was baptized with water by John, the Holy Spirit came to rest on Jesus in the form of a dove, revealing to John that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. John baptized people with water as a sign of repentance, but it is Jesus who baptizes people with the Holy Spirit at their conversion (Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:4-7; John 15:26).

Key Text to Memorize

John 1:29 ‘The next day he (John) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”’
Theology to know

Baptism. “Baptizo” (Greek) means to “dip in or plunge under the water”. Baptism is a sacrament of the church that identifies those who are Christ-followers. Baptism is not a saving act (one is saved by grace through faith-Ephesians 2:8,9), but it is an act of obedience to Jesus (Matthew 28:19) and an act of identification with Jesus, as He Himself was baptized (Mark 1:9-11). Baptism should follow one’s belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38).

Lamb of God. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice of a lamb to take away sin is seen frequently (e.g., Genesis 4:4, 8:20, 22:2-8; Exodus 12:21-27). Jesus being the “Lamb of God” is seen four times in the New Testament (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19). In these passages, it is Jesus’ sacrificial character that is referred to. While in the book of Revelation, Jesus is presented as “Lamb”, but now it is a triumphal title, memorializing the completion of his sacrificial work. Jesus was the only perfect Lamb that could permanently atone for our sin once and for all.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. John had a clear understanding of who he was and what his purpose was. Do you have that kind of clarity in your life? What are some issues or events that caused you confusion or have given you clarity?

2. In verses 19-34, John’s eyes are suddenly opened to Jesus as the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away sin. Tell about when your eyes were opened to Jesus as your Messiah.

3. John’s purpose was to prepare people for the first coming of Jesus. How can you personally, and we as the church, prepare people for the second coming of Jesus?

Living on Mission

If you haven’t been baptized already, follow Jesus’ example and obey his command and get baptized! As you live the Gospel out to those who do not yet know Jesus, proclaim Jesus as the Lamb of God, the only one who can take away sin and reconnect people to God the Father.

Prayer Emphasis

Meditate on John 1:29. Confess to Jesus sins that you are committing, receive the forgiveness that he has given you, and thank him for taking away your sin!
Study #3 – Mission: Disciples John 1:35-51

Overview

Here we meet Jesus’ first disciples: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. John, the Evangelist who wrote the gospel, may also be included in this group, as the second disciple of John the Baptizer who wasn’t named (1:35, 40). We can come to this conclusion based on two reasons: 1) John often doesn’t refer to himself by name in his writings, and 2) the author possesses intimate knowledge of the calling of Jesus’ first disciples. “Disciple” literally means ‘pupil’ or ‘learner’; and in the case of New Testament disciples, learners of a Rabbi (‘Master’ or ‘Teacher’). The goal of a disciple is to learn to become just like his Rabbi in every way possible. So being a disciple was an intense commitment to a lifestyle, not just a static, classroom environment. Another interesting note here is that Jesus’ first disciples were already disciples of John the Baptizer. Not only was John preparing the people in general for the coming of the Christ, but apparently preparing the disciples of the Christ!

This section is the first apparent contradiction with the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). In the Synoptics, Jesus is shown walking along the shore and ‘calling’ his disciples to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11). Were there two callings? Not at all. In John’s account, Jesus doesn’t do any calling at all (except perhaps with Philip). The men hear John the Baptizer’s pronouncement of who Jesus is and then follow on their own. Jesus then asks the potential disciples a question regarding their motives for desiring to follow him (‘What are you seeking?’) and then makes a series of statements: one of hospitality (‘come and see’ where he is staying), one of renaming Simon (with a nickname that either illustrated his personality or his thick-headedness!), one of complimenting Nathanael’s character (1:47), and then a couple comments that gave these potential disciples a glimpse into Jesus’ deity (1:50-51). It is important to note here that John 2:1 (which we’ll study next) says “one the third day”; meaning, the third day after the interaction with Nathanael. It is very conceivable that the accounts of Jesus ‘calling’ his first disciples as written in the Synoptics happened during those couple of days between Jesus’ conversation with Nathanael and the wedding at Cana, where Jesus is pictured with his disciples (2:2).

Key Text to Memorize

John 1:49 ‘Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel.”’

Theology to know

Son of Man. John 1:51 introduces us to a term that occurs 13 times in the Fourth Gospel: Son of Man. It is a curious title that Jesus uses primarily in reference to himself. It is not as politically packed as “King of Israel”, nor is it overly religious as “Lamb of God”, “Son of God”, or “Messiah.” It echoes of Daniel 7:13-14 where God (entitled “Ancient of Days”) gives “one like a
son of man” dominion and power in an eschatological fashion. The beauty of this title for Jesus is that it indeed does marry both his humanity and his divinity, and since Jesus uses the term primarily, he is the one controlling the context in which it is used, demonstrating his authority. Lastly, the verse in which this title is used is one that Jesus is illustrating his divinity and communication with the Father, thus emphasizes Jesus’ incarnation (John 1:14).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Recall when you first became a disciple of Jesus. Did someone point you to Jesus, or was there a more direct link of Jesus ‘calling’ you?

2. Do you view your discipleship primarily as a lifestyle pattern or as a structured learning time? What are the pros and cons of each viewpoint?

3. In dealing with these first disciples, Jesus quickly addresses heart issues of their motivation for following him (1:38) and their character (1:42, 47). How do you value the issues of character and knowledge in your discipleship? Is one more important that the other?

4. Nathanael was quick to judge Jesus based on where he was from (1:46). Are there people in your life (family, coworkers, neighbors, classmates, etc.) that you write off as never becoming a disciple of Jesus? Where is your prejudice coming from?

Living on Mission

Discipleship is a lifestyle, not simply acquiring knowledge. Refocus your lifestyle around being like Jesus. Find someone to help guide you in your journey, and then find someone to that you can help guide as well!

Prayer Emphasis

“Jesus, help me surrender everything to follow you.”
Overview

There are few events more enjoyable than a good wedding. And in 1st Century Palestine, weddings were a big deal. There would be a big feast, the wedding ceremony, a big parade through town, and then a week-long open house/party for the couple instead of them going on a honeymoon. One thing’s for sure: the Jewish culture is a party culture! Because this was such a big deal, showing tremendous hospitality to the wedding guests was imperative. Many people during this time and in this area (Cana in Galilee) were poor, and this was the biggest event perhaps in their lives. So running out of wine, which in the Jewish culture was a symbol of joy (Psalm 104:15; Isaiah 55:1), was a massive embarrassment!

Jesus, his disciples, and his mother were all present at this wedding, which probably meant that it was a family member or close friend of their family who was getting married. Jesus’ mother, I believe out of concern for the couple, brings the issue of being out of wine to Jesus, knowing that he was able to rectify the situation. Given the wedding environment, Jesus’ response is packed with theological meaning. Saying that “My hour has not yet come” is a reference to his own wedding feast (Revelation 19); it is the groom who was responsible for his own wedding during this time, and Jesus is saying that this wedding isn't his responsibility, but his time is coming!

But here we see the great compassion of Jesus. His first miracle was not something grandiose like feeding thousands of people from a sack lunch or raising someone from the dead. His first miracle was only really noticed by a few people, and it was done to save tremendous social embarrassment. And it is worthy to note here that Jesus made somewhere in the neighborhood of 120-180 gallons of good wine, not the cheap stuff that’s served once everybody’s already more than a little tipsy (2:10).

This was first time Jesus “manifested His glory” – through a quiet act of compassion that brought joy back to people.

Key Text to Memorize

John 2:11 “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.”

Theology to know

Miracle. Miracles are “signs and wonders” that occur with no natural explanation. They are basically supernatural acts performed by a supernatural God that invade our natural, everyday world. Since God exists above and beyond our world and is the author of our natural laws, and not subject to them, God has the ability work above and beyond those laws, and to do so
through whomever he chooses (e.g., Moses, Elijah, the Apostles). Norman Geisler has said, “The only way to show that miracles are impossible is to disprove the existence of God.” And that has never been done.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Since wine is a symbol of joy, and Jesus’ first miracle was to “restore joy” at this wedding celebration, how would you rate your joy-level as a Christ-follower? What take your joy away? What restores your joy?

2. Describe a time when someone showed you a quiet act of compassion that gave you a glimpse into the reality of God’s glory.

3. Have you experienced a miracle in your life? What happened? Do you need a miracle in your life today? What do you need that only God can provide?

4. In light of John 2:11, how important is the presence of the miraculous for you to believe in Jesus?

Living on Mission

Look for ways that you can show quiet acts of compassion to people this week (help someone with household/yard chores, babysit, buy a stranger’s lunch, bus your own table at a restaurant, pick up trash at a public place, etc.).

Prayer Emphasis

Thank God for the compassion that he showed you by bringing you into His family. Have faith and ask Him for a miracle that you need in your life (John 14:12-14; 16:22-24).
Overview

After the wedding at Cana, Jesus went down to the city of Capernaum, which was “ministry headquarters” for Jesus. John also makes mention of Jesus’ family in verse 12. Joseph is not mentioned after Jesus’ birth accounts, leading us to believe that he may have passed away by this time in Jesus’ life. Also mentioned here are Jesus’ brothers, which Mark 6:3 expounds on (naming the brothers as well as mentioning sisters). Two of Jesus brothers became leaders in the church and authors of New Testament books (James & Jude, respectively). Most likely, Jesus’ brothers and sisters were born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus’ birth, rather than being cousins or children of Joseph’s prior to his marriage to Mary as some would argue.

The next section vividly shows Jesus’ passion. The Synoptics have this event of cleansing the temple occurring during the Passion Week, but there are enough details given in John’s account, such as the intentional fashioning of a whip and his resurrection prophecy, to lead us to believe that this was a separate event. The fashioning of the whip is the most interesting part of the story. Jesus didn’t just react; he intentionally plotted and prepared his response. The selling of animals for sacrifices was allowable in the temple courts, as it was a service to those traveling who were unable to bring their offerings with them. The problem was that those who were selling were basically extorting the people by inflating prices and selling sub-standard animals.

In response to a challenge from the Jews witnessing Jesus ‘cleaning house’, Jesus makes his first recorded prophecy regarding his own resurrection. This passage clues us into the literalness that the Jews expected of the Messiah. Jesus came to deliver people spiritually, not politically. So when he spoke of destroying ‘this temple’ (in reference to his body) they were oblivious to his meaning.

Jesus was very careful at this stage of his ministry to whom he revealed himself to, knowing that man’s heart is a wicked thing apart from the Gospel. The misuse and abuse of the temple in which he just cleared out and the denseness of the Jews he spoke with was evidence of that. But there were many who did believe in him based on the miracles he performed. But Jesus isn’t interested shallow faith that birthed from his miraculous signs, he is interested in genuine faith that will stand up under the pressures of persecution and hardship (see Matthew 5:10-12).

Key Text to Memorize

John 2:19 ‘Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”’
Theology to know

Prophecy. Pastor Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church wrote the following thorough exegesis on the gift of prophecy:

There is great abuse of and confusion about the gift of prophecy. Much like the gifts of apostleship and pastor, there is both an office that is limited to a few people and a gifting and ministry that is open to many who receive the spiritual gift of prophecy.

In the Old Testament, the title “prophet” refers to the office of the person chosen by God to both hear from and communicate for Him (1 Samuel 3:20; 1 Kings 18:36; 2 Kings 6; 12; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). The prophetic calling combined two ministries. First, prophets received specific revelation directly from God. Second, they spoke that revealed Word to the people God had called them to. The prophets were also painfully aware of the weightiness of their call since they consciously knew that they were the very mouth of Almighty God and spoke for God Himself. This is clearly seen in Moses (Exodus 4:12; 7:1-2), Isaiah (Isaiah 1:2), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:7), Amos (Amos 3:8; 7:16), and Zechariah (Zechariah 7:12). According to the Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad, the phrase “the word of Yahweh” appears 241 times in the Old Testament, 221 in relation to a prophet.

Additionally, Jesus (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24), Paul (Acts 20:29-31) and John (1 John 4:1) all promised that false prophets would come. False prophets falsely claim to speak for God (1 Kings 22) and may also perform false miracles (Deuteronomy 13:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13-15).

While no one single test for authentication of a prophet is appropriate, a few criteria help distinguish between true and false prophets. A true prophet had outstanding moral character (Ezekiel 13:10-16), while false prophets did not (Isaiah 28:7). The prophecy of a true prophet came true every time (Deuteronomy 18; Jeremiah 28; 1 Kings 22). False prophets were for hire and preached what they were paid to preach (Micah 3:11). False prophets prophesied only peace (Jeremiah 6:13-14; 8:10-11). The message of a false prophet conflicted with God’s prior revelation, led to the worship of false gods, and was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 13). Perhaps the most thorough descriptions of false prophets are given in Deuteronomy 18:14-22 and Jeremiah 23:9-40. Today, Christians can also help to discern between true and false prophets by their inward testimony of the Spirit (Deuteronomy 18:14-22; John 7:17).

The Old Testament prophets were raised up by God along with the New Testament apostles to give us His Word that we now know as Scripture (Ephesians 2:20). Therefore, with the canon of Scripture now closed, the office of prophet does not exist in our day as it did before the Scriptures were completed.

There remains, however, the spiritual gift and ministry of prophecy. Like tongues, prophecy is also spoken of in various ways throughout Scripture. Importantly, the New Testament does not elevate prophecy to the highest level of authority as the Old Testament does. Each potential prophecy is supposed to be tested and approved by church leaders such as the elders (1 Corinthians 14:29-32; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

1. In the broadest sense, prophecy is sometimes the teaching ministry of preaching the Bible as God’s Word in the church. Examples include 1 Corinthians 14:4 where prophecy “edify the church,” 14:6-7 where Paul links prophecy and teaching, saying, “prophecy or word of instruction,” and 14:24-25 where he explains that through the Spirit-enabled preaching of the Bible, non-Christians will be convicted of their sin and give their lives to Jesus.

2. Prophecy is sometimes a revelation about a future event that God intends to reveal to the entire church; a revelation that is authenticated by coming true as predicted. Roughly 25 percent of the Bible was prophetic in this regard in that it foretold future events. This is what Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 14:6 where he links “revelation or knowledge or prophecy.” A clear example of this is Acts 11:28-29, where the prophet Agabus predicted a famine, thereby preparing the early Christians to better help people.
3. Prophecy is sometimes a word from God to be given to an individual. An example of this is the prophet Agabus who told Paul how he would die in Acts 21:10-11.

Having established the three ways in which tongues and prophecy are used in the New testament, we will examine three instructions regarding their use in 1 Corinthians 14:1-25.

1. We are to value every gift and elevate Bible preaching/prophecy as the place of authority in the church (14:1-5).
2. We are to value gifts that build up the whole church and not just the person exercising the gift (14:6-12).
3. Church services should not overlook the need for non-Christians present to become Christians, which best happens by preaching God’s word with the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit (14:23-25).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Jesus demonstrates some “righteous anger” as he clears the temple. When can anger be “righteous”? Why was it important that Jesus didn’t immediately react, but took time to plan his response?

2. Jesus’ passion for the church is clear here. What is it about the church that you are passionate about? What are some things about the church in 2008 that you feel needs to be cleared out? What can you do about it?

3. It is clear that Jesus was beginning his ministry with the end in mind (his resurrection). What is your purpose in God’s Kingdom? How is what you are doing now leading you to that purpose?

4. Do an honest evaluation of your faith. Does your faith hold up under persecution and hardship? Or is your faith dependant on religious programs and events?

Living on Mission

God has designed you to achieve a specific purpose in His Kingdom. Sometimes discovering that purpose takes years, going through many trials and errors. Find some ministry areas that interest you and try them out to help discover your purpose and passion.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for wisdom and understanding that God will reveal to you how He’s designed you and what He’s designed you for.
Study #6 – Mission: Savior  John 3:1-21

Overview

This section contains the most well-known verse in the Bible that is seen at most NFL games behind the goal posts, John 3:16; a verse that Martin Luther called “the gospel in miniature.” This verse is in the context of a conversation that Jesus is having with a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a member of the Pharisees (see notes in Study #2) as well as a member of the Sanhedrin (meaning that he was one of the 70 ruling elders over all Israel). And, according to verse 10, he may have had the reputation of being Israel’s foremost teacher; similar to the view most people have of Billy Graham in our day. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, probably hoping to avert any controversy, as Jesus and the Pharisees typically didn’t get along. Interestingly, Nicodemus respectfully referred to Jesus as “Rabbi” – surly carrying with it more weight than Jesus’ blue-collar fisherman disciples. Also, in light of verse 2, it was Jesus’ miracles that affirmed Nicodemus’ respect; confirming Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 1:22.

In regards to John 3:16, it is imperative to understand that the key word is not necessarily loved, but rather gave. For love is always action, and not mere affection. John 3:16 is sandwiched right between verses 14-15 which are highlighting Jesus’ death (an ultimate act of giving) and verse 17, which underscores his incarnation. As DA Carson writes, “...the immediate result of the love of God for the world [is] the mission of the Son.” Salvation was and still is the goal. By believing in Jesus one experiences new birth (3:3,5), has eternal life (3:15,16), and is saved (v. 17). This offer has been now presented to the world (v. 16, 17) as opposed to just the Jewish race.

Jesus has painted a beautiful picture of God’s love, His mission, and the salvation that God has to offer. Sadly, the section ends with Jesus giving us a sober telling of the human condition: we’re inherently evil and will always choose darkness over light. Jesus also says that because of people’s unbelief they are already condemning themselves. Jesus didn’t come to condemn, but to love (v. 17). And as we seek to live lives like our Lord Jesus, we also need to bring His love into this world rather than bringing in condemnation.

Key Text to Memorize

John 3:14-15 “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.”

Theology to know

Salvation. Two key phrases are used in describing the salvation that God offers us through Jesus: “born again” and “eternal life.” Being “born again” (3:3) infers that at the moment of salvation, a person is spiritually a brand new person. Other terms that we read in scripture to describe this is “regeneration” and “renewal” (Titus 3:5). So, our salvation is not just getting
saved from an eternity in hell, but it is also signifying a complete transformation of who we are (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Ezekiel 36:26).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Jesus’ miracles are what confirmed Jesus’ anointing to Nicodemus. What about Jesus has confirmed your belief in Him as God?

2. Why do some Christians condemn the world, even though Jesus Himself said that he did not come to condemn? How can you show more love rather than condemnation?

3. Why do people love darkness more than the light? What is it that pulls people out of the darkness into the light?

Living on Mission

Some of the most “lost” people in our world are the religious people who sit in church every week, serve in ministry, and maybe even teach – much like the Pharisees. Seek to befriend someone like this and model to them the true life transformation that Jesus truly offers.

Prayer Emphasis

“Jesus, thank you for saving me and giving me eternal life. Help me to love the world like you loved the world and not show condemnation.”
Study #7 – Mission: Decrease  John 3:22-4:3

Overview

John the Baptizer is back on the scene in this section of Scripture. John has not yet been arrested (v. 24), but has most likely already had some run-ins with Herod (the one who eventually had him beheaded – see Mark 6:14-29) because the place he is now baptizing, Aenon near Salim, is most likely near the Greek city of Scythopolis, outside of Herod’s rule.

The Jewish legalists are seen again debating with John’s disciples about purification. The argument centers on the ritual of purification that the Jews practiced versus the type of heart repentance that John (and Jesus) preached. But the issue that John’s disciples brought to him wasn’t the purification issue (apparently, John’s disciples knew enough to not argue about empty tradition and it’s best to just ignore the legalists), but rather the issue of who’s ministry was more popular. Interestingly, we discover here that part of Jesus’ ministry was also baptizing those who followed Him. The Fourth Gospel is the only Gospel that mentions Jesus’ baptism ministry, while John 4:2 tells us that Jesus did not baptize, but rather his disciples did. The important lesson here is that it is not any religious activity that is the most important thing, even if that activity is a sacrament of the church (baptism and communion). The most important thing is the salvation that Jesus brings to the world (John 3:14-17).

John the Baptizer and Jesus were the religious rock stars of their time. Both drew big crowds, both got in the face of the religious legalists, both were Rabbis, and both had disciples. John’s disciples may have been feeling a little paranoid that John’s ministry was going in the tank compared to Jesus’, especially since some of Jesus’ first disciples were former disciples of John’s (James, John, Peter, and Andrew). John shows tremendous self-awareness and humility to his disciples. John was confident in his call as the forerunner to Jesus, and he knew that Jesus’ mission, ministry, and gifting far surpassed his own. John models tremendous humility here, and also verbally confirms Jesus’ deity and that faith in Jesus is the only way for a person to have eternal life (3:36), not any activity; even baptism.

Key Text to Memorize

John 3:30 “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Theology to know

Wrath of God. We typically don’t like to talk about the wrath of God in the New Testament. We see it all over the Old Testament, as God destroys entire cities and armies who are sinful. But having a clear understanding of the wrath of God makes Jesus’ work on the cross even more a reason to worship. In our sin, we are subjects of God’s wrath (Romans 1:18; Ephesians 2:3, 5:6), fully deserving the punishment for our many sins. Jesus took that punishment for us, thereby satisfying God’s wrath (meaning, all God’s wrath that was directed toward humanity
was literally dumped on Jesus). This is called propitiation, the satisfaction of God’s wrath due to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:23-25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. What “religious practices” do you see yourself or others tempted to be made more important than the Gospel message?

2. What does this section have to say about churches or ministries that “compete”? Should there ever be such a thing? How can a spirit of competition be avoided between churches and ministries?

3. Do you see God as a God who is angry over sin? Does the idea of a wrathful God make you comfortable or uncomfortable? Why or why not?

Living on Mission

With a spirit of Christ-like love and humility, send a note to the pastor of another church in Springfield. Thank them for their ministry and write a prayer out for that pastor.

Prayer Emphasis

“God, I pray that Jesus and His Gospel would ever increase in my life. I pray that my self-centered, sinful ways would decrease. I pray that I would never draw anyone to myself, but always point them to Jesus.”
In this section we find Jesus living in full missionary glory, engaging a people and culture that were completely marginalized by the Jews. We see Jesus relating to a Samaritan woman and speaking truth into her life, pointing her towards ultimate fulfillment (4:13-14).

Jesus and his disciples had left Jerusalem and were headed back north to Galilee. Most Jews making this trip would take a long route around Samaria, as there was intense hatred between the two groups. The Samaritans were a mixed race of half Jews/half Gentiles who had a mixed bag of religion. When the Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722BC, they deported the Jewish captives from Assyria, and settled what was Samaria with captives from other lands. The Samaritans also had no love lost for the “pure” Jews, for they had even opposed Nehemiah’s rebuilding of the wall in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4:1-2). In John 4:4, it says that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria.” The only reason he had to pass through Samaria is because his mission was to preach the Kingdom of God to the poor, needy, and marginalized. This is a great picture of Jesus’ missionary heart!

The woman comes to the well where Jesus is at noon (the sixth hour). The sun would be incredibly hot during this time of day, and the chores of drawing water would have typically already been done in the cooler morning hours. But she comes at noon, and given what we find out about her general character (having had five husbands and now shacking up with guy who she’s not married to), it would be safe to say that she is an outcast. Jesus quickly uses the immediate surroundings (water, the mountain) to communicate hope and fulfillment to this woman. Jesus speaks into her life, not with judgment, but with love. The content, as well as the tone, of Jesus’ conversation with this woman resulted in her salvation.

This is also the first time that Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah. Until now, others have proclaimed him as the Christ (Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, John the Baptist); or Jesus has referred to himself in the third person (i.e., his frequent references to the “Son of Man” in his conversation with Nicodemus). But it was to a shunned, marginalized, sinful Samaritan woman who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah that Jesus said “I who speak to you am he” (4:26).

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 4:23 “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”
Theology to know

Worship. Worship literally means to proclaim the “worth” of someone or something. As Christ-followers, we proclaim the highest worth to Jesus. In this passage, Jesus states that God the Father is seeking worshippers who worship in Spirit and in Truth. Worshipping in spirit is Holy Spirit inspired adoration between Jesus and His followers (1 Corinthians 12:3). Worshipping in truth tells of the focus of our worship: the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Who are the marginalized and outcast in our culture? How would Jesus reach them if he were here on earth now? How can you reach them?

2. Jesus illustrated the Gospel with the woman using objects that were surrounding them. What are some everyday events or things that you could use to communicate the Gospel with someone?

3. Think about what you give worth to in your everyday life. Where do you spend a lot of your time, energy, and resources? How can you funnel or redirect those things toward Jesus?

Living on Mission

In light of Question 1, make a plan to go and love on a person or group of marginalized and outcast in our local culture. If you would like some help identifying a group, please contact the Delta office so we may assist you.

Prayer Emphasis

Ask God to turn your heart toward Him so that you fully worship Jesus in spirit and in truth.
Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman continues with His disciples coming back from town with food for the weary and hungry Rabbi. Jesus was still in conversation with the woman, and his disciples were surprised to say the least; but out of deep respect for Jesus and knowing that everything Jesus did had a purpose, they kept their mouth shut and just listened. This is a great lesson for us; too often we think we can do Jesus’ job of evangelizing and discipling better then Him, so we speak up and try to impose our ideas. When in reality, we need to keep quiet, read His word, listen to Him, and just obey and follow His lead.

Here we see perhaps the first missionary of the New Testament: the Samaritan Woman! Echoing how many of Jesus’ disciples “dropped their nets” to follow Jesus, the woman “left her water jar” to go tell people about Jesus. This woman, who had a sketchy reputation, ran back to her town and didn’t bother communicating the deeply theological conversation she had with Jesus, but simply proclaimed, “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did.” What was so amazing about this? Surely most of the town knew her story! Not only did Jesus know her story by way of omniscience, but he never condemned her. The woman found someone who knew all of the skeletons in her closet, but still showed her love.

Jesus goes on to teach his disciples 2 important lessons: 1) True satisfaction doesn’t come from temporal things like food. True satisfaction comes from joining God in His work by exercising our God-given gifts and abilities for the expansion of God’s Kingdom. And 2) There are always a great number of people ready to receive the Gospel. The picture here is beautiful. In verse 30, many Samaritans went out to see Jesus because of the woman’s testimony, and as they are walking to the well where Jesus was with his disciples, Jesus says “Lift up your eyes, and that the fields are white for harvest.” We may think that there are not many people yet to hear the Gospel in our city, but Jesus says that we just need to look around! The Samaritans were definitely outside of the disciples’ immediate network; sometimes we need to expand the relational networks that we have to discover a whole new harvest of souls hungry for the Gospel. Jesus stayed with the Samaritans another two days. It did not please Jesus to just do “drive-by evangelism” because people mattered too much to Him. Jesus had a commitment to the people that he preached to.

The townspeople made an important statement to the Samaritan woman-evangelist, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” Their belief became their own and wasn’t based on anybody else. That is the first mark of growing in maturity as a Christ-follower.

Key Text to Memorize

John 4:35 “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”
Theology to know

_Sowing & Reaping._ Jesus gives a brief teaching here that Paul also teaches in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. Jesus is Lord of the Harvest and is ultimately responsible for the growth and the reaping of the harvest (i.e., the lost becoming found; the perishing becoming saved). But we have been given the privilege and the responsibility to preach the Gospel to the lost and perishing. By doing this we sow, plant and water the potential harvest. God joyfully includes us in his work and we have the opportunity to joyfully respond. Paul sums this up in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 3, “For we are God’s fellow workers.”

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Tell of a time when you participated in God’s work and found yourself feeling very fulfilled and satisfied.

2. Jesus said that there is always a harvest at hand. Who are some people in your life that are disconnected from God and need an opportunity to hear the Gospel and be involved in God’s community?

3. When did your belief in Jesus become your own belief and not a faith that was passed down from your parents or another person in your life? Tell your story to at least 2 people this week.

Living on Mission

As Jesus said, “lift up your eyes” to see the potential harvest around you. Do your part through your lifestyle, service, and verbal testimony to join God in reaping a great harvest here in Springfield!

Prayer Emphasis

Ask God, the Lord of the Harvest, to present you with the opportunity to join His work and to see at least 1 person come to faith in Jesus in the next month.
Study #10 – Mission: Healing John 4:43-5:9

Overview

Jesus now leaves Sychar in Samaria and heads back to Galilee. His reputation has preceded him, as many Galileans witnessed what Jesus did in Jerusalem (John 2:13-25). When Jesus arrived in the village of Capernaum, an official from the royal house sought Jesus out so Jesus could heal his dying son. Jesus at first seems to speak sharply to him, criticizing the need to see miracles to believe. But the royal official keeps persisting, begging Jesus to heal his son. The official at this point isn’t looking for a Messiah to believe in, he just knows that Jesus is a healer and he wants his boy well. Jesus responds to the official’s persistence and shows how great his power is by not even having to physically touch the boy in order to heal him. And as a result of the miracle, the official along with his entire household came to faith in Jesus.

Jesus is seen on the scene again in Jerusalem for another feast. This is the only time that John doesn’t specifically designate which feast is being celebrated. This would be due to that the context of the feast itself is not important to the content of the story, only the fact that it was a Sabbath is pertinent (v. 9, which we’ll cover in the next study). But, the most likely feasts that is being referred to is either the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths, see Leviticus 23:33-44) or a Passover (see Leviticus 23:4-8). If it was indeed the Passover, then it is possible that Jesus’ ministry went on for up to 3 ½ years and that he celebrated 4 Passovers. Regardless, which feast it was did not matter to John, except to point out that Jesus faithfully observed all the feasts that God His Father instituted.

John points out some interesting Jewish folklore to set up Jesus’ next recorded healing (the 3rd recorded miracle in John out of 7). Apparently there was a pool called Bethesda (meaning ‘House of Mercy’) to where legend had it that an angel would come down once a day, stir up the water, and the first person that entered the water would be healed of any ailment they had. Now, the man being an invalid (essentially, paralyzed) was unable to get himself into the water for healing. Some try to make a correlation between the man being paralyzed for 38 years to the Israelites desert wanderings for 38 years. That seems to be a stretch to make the connection. The point that John is most likely making is that any religious tradition or superstition (walking an aisle, praying the rosary, etc) has no true regenerative power. Only Jesus Christ himself brings true fulfillment and healing to our fractured states. We simply respond to his invitation of “Do you want to be healed” from our sin that paralyzes us by picking up our proverbial mat and walking away from sin and walking into our Savior’s arms (which is repentance), fully restored to live the new life that only Jesus can give.

Key Text to Memorize

John 4:50 “Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son will live.’ The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.”
Theology to know

Healing. It is extremely clear in scripture where Jesus and his disciples physically heal people from ailments, life-long disabilities, and diseases. This is a fulfillment of a great promise of God given in Isaiah 35:5-6. Healing is also an extension of the gospel... “reversing the curse” (Genesis 3) so to speak. Disease entered our world with the arrival of sin, and the Gospel is powerful enough to overcome it. James 5:13-18 gives clear guidelines on how healing is to be done with Christ-followers. God does not choose to heal every sickness or disease, for reasons unknown to us. But we do know that everything, including sickness and disease, is an opportunity to reveal the glory of God (John 9:3).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Are there any “old wives tales” that you believe in, regarding healing physical ailments?

2. What types of hurt do you see in the world around you – physically, emotionally, psychologically, relationally, or spiritually? How do you typically respond?

3. How regularly do you pray to Jesus for healing? What’s motivating prayers you pray – physical comfort or God’s glory? Why don’t you think Jesus heals everybody?

4. Have you ever been supernaturally healed? Tell about it.

Living on Mission

There are many sick and hurting people all around you. Many of their hurts are indeed physical that Jesus is more than capable of healing, but many of them are hurt emotionally, psychologically, relationally, and spiritually as well. Look for ways that you can practically show love, care, and appropriate affection to the hurt. If someone is sick, be bold in laying your hands on them and asking Jesus to heal them as he wills.

Prayer Emphasis

Direct your prayers to the Great Physician, believing with all your heart that Jesus is able to heal any and all hurt – physical, emotional, psychological, relational, and spiritual.
Study #11 – Mission: Sabbath  John 5:9-18

Overview

This section of scripture is a continuation of the story of Jesus healing the invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda. The amazing thing about this story might not being that Jesus was able to heal him, but how the Jewish responded to the man who was healed. This man was an invalid for 38 years, and the first thing that the Jewish leaders said to him was not “Praise God! You are healed!”; instead, the first thing they said was “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed” (verse 10). These religious legalists were so focused on keeping the letter of the law that they were utterly insensitive to a great working of God. They then begin to pepper the man about who it was that healed him, but Jesus went incognito and slipped away.

At some later point, the healed man found Jesus, and Jesus makes a spiritual connection to the physical healing that he performed. I believe the point to be this: God does indeed receive glory through physical healing, but God receives ultimate glory through “soul healing” (cf. John 9:3 and 11:4). When repentance and life transformation happen on a truly heart level, the ultimate power of God is shown, for that is the power he holds of sin and death.

Once the man discovered it was Jesus who healed him, he reported back to the Jewish leaders, most likely out of fear. The Jews then charge Jesus with breaking the Sabbath as well. But Jesus answers their charge of breaking the Sabbath by saying in essence, “I’m just being about my Father’s business.” This just added fuel to the Jews’ fire. Not only were they already greatly annoyed at Jesus’ constant breaking of the Sabbath, but also at his identification as God as His personal Father.

Key Text to Memorize

John 5:17 “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’”

Theology to know

Sabbath and Work. The theology of the Sabbath (which literally means, “rest”) goes back to Genesis 2:1-2 to where God rested after doing His work of creation. God then communicated to Moses in Exodus 20:8-11 that observance of the weekly Sabbath was mandated in the 10 commandments. In another confrontation with the Pharisees in Matthew 12:1-14, Jesus teaches that the spirit of Sabbath is about glorifying God, which can readily be done through acts of mercy and compassion (such as healing). Common understanding of the Sabbath law was that a person would refrain from work that their regular employment demanded of them, but the “tradition of the elders” expanded this to include 39 different classes of work. This is the realm in which the healed man gets reprimanded (for carrying his mat) and that Jesus gets challenged (for “doing things” – see John 5:16). The reality is that God the Father is always at
work, and if he weren’t, our entire universe would spin out of control and cease to exist for He, through the Person of Jesus Christ, holds all things together (Colossians 1:17).

All this to say that one should indeed take a regular, weekly Sabbath to give God glory by enjoying the gift of life that God has given (1 Corinthians 10:31). We should take a day off from our jobs that provide income. And since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, every day is an opportunity to worship and give Him glory, not a set day (like Saturday or Sunday). And we should always look for opportunities to bless others through acts of love, mercy, and compassion no matter what “day” of the week it may be.

The general rule of Work and Sabbath is this: work hard, and rest well.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. What are your work habits like? Are you a lazy worker, a hard worker, or a work-a-holic? Are you able to have some control of your work schedule?

2. Do you take a regular Sabbath rest? What does/should this look like for you weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually? Do you have appropriate boundaries to protect yourself and your loved ones from you working too much, so you can rest well with them?

3. Jesus said that the Father is always working. Do you look for opportunities each day to join God in His work? What keeps you from seeing these opportunities? What can you do to “tune in” better to God and the work He’s doing?

Living on Mission

Do you Sabbath? Do you intentionally take time and rhythm your like as God designed so you can rest, enjoy God’s creation, and enjoy your family and friends without distraction from the daily pressures of life and work? Plan intentional times weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually that you can unplug and enjoy God.

Prayer Emphasis

Thank God for the rhythm of the Sabbath. Ask Him for the ability and the accountability to keep a regular Sabbath. Ask Him for eyes to see the work He’s doing and the strength to join Him.
Study #12 – Mission: Trinity  John 5:18-30

Overview

This narrative is Jesus expounding on verse 17, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” In the Jewish culture, calling someone “Father” put you on equal terms with man (especially for first born sons, as they were the main heirs). No Jew would ever call God ‘Father’! For Jesus to call God “Father” was Jesus plainly stating that He Himself is equal to God. This is the simplest definition of blaspheme, the attribution of oneself as divine.

Jesus makes three “truth” statements in regards to His deity:

1. “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” (v. 19)
   Here we see that God the Father is the initiator, and Jesus exercises ‘functional subordination’ (although Jesus is not inferior, he is equal). Although the Father and the Son are equal, there are different roles they each play (as is true with the Spirit). But the most important aspect to point out here is that Jesus does indeed do exactly what the Father does, showing his equality of power.

2. “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.” (v. 24)
   Jesus teaches here that his words and the words of the Father (i.e., the Old Testament) are equal. Jesus and his teaching are the fulfillment of everything that the Old Testament (or as the Jews would say, the “Tenach”) was about, namely, God’s story of the redemption of man. You cannot believe just one or the other. Believing one is believing in the other as well.

3. “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”
   Jesus had already said in verse 21 of chapter 5 that the Father is the one who holds the power over death, and he shares that power with the Son. John 10 also teaches that it is the Father who gives the Son those who are His. But it is only through responding to the voice of the Son that one is brought from death to life; both spiritually (as this passage is referring) as well as physically (as Paul teaches is 1 Corinthians 15, and John alludes to in Revelation 11).

Jesus makes it clear that He and the Father (and the Spirit) are indeed one, and the glue that holds the Trinity together is love (verse 20), for the Trinitarian God is love (1 John 4:8,16).

Key Text to Memorize

John 5:23 “Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”
Theology to know

*Trinity.* The word “Trinity” does not actually appear in scripture, although the concept clearly does, as illustrated in this passage. The first person to use the word “Trinity” was the early church father Tertullian, who lived from 150-220 AD. To say that God is Trinity does not mean that there are three gods, or three different manifestations of god. Trinity means that there is one God (essence) who exists in three persons (Father, Son, Spirit) who are all equal in attributes, yet distinct in role.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Why is the deity of Jesus so important? What would change if Jesus wasn’t God?

2. What does the doctrine of the Trinity teach us about how God functions in light of community? If God exists in Trinitarian community, what should community look like for His followers?

3. The last part of Jesus’ teaching talked about the resurrection; or another way to think of it, eternal community. How should the resurrection impact our participation in community?

Living on Mission

The heart of Biblical community is service and sacrifice motivated by the Gospel. How invested are you in your faith community? Outside of serving in whatever ministry program you serve in, look for ways to intentionally serve and sacrifice for the people of your faith community.

Prayer Emphasis

Thank God for being community and placing you in a community of faith. Repent of ways that you have not built up your community and ask for the ability and power to change that.
Overview

Upon coming off of his claim of being God, Jesus continues his argument now by giving his resume, or at least his credentials and references. Jesus lists 5 references in which he derives his credibility as Messiah:

1. God the Father (v. 30-32, 36-37)
2. John the Baptizer (v. 32-35)
3. His works (i.e., ministry & miracles) (v. 36)
4. Scripture (v. 38-39)
5. Moses (v. 46-47)

Each of these references point to Jesus as the Truth (v. 32) and the way to eternal life (v. 40). In other words, they show that Jesus' gospel is the true gospel. Jesus then pointedly calls out the Jewish leaders on their belief in “false gospels.” Jesus points out 5 of them as well:

1. Lack of love (v. 42)
2. Selfishness (v. 43)
3. Seeking personal glory (v. 44)
4. Short-sightedness (v. 44)
5. Looking to only part, and the whole, of Scripture (v. 45-47)

The Jews most likely had difficulty in receiving Jesus as Messiah because he did not preach a physical deliverance from their current Roman oppression, but preached a heavenly kingdom. This was most visible illustration of this was when the Jews asked for the release of Barabbas (a robber, murderer, and insurrectionist) instead of Jesus (John 18:40; Luke 23:18-25). The belief in false gospels was an issue that Paul had to deal with in the church in Galatia (Galatians 1:6-10). Most often, as in Jesus’ ministry, Paul’s ministry, and in the church today, the “false gospel” is one that centers around legalistic religion or self-gratification (also can be called paganism).

Key Text to Memorize

John 5:39 “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

Theology to know

Testimony/Witness. ‘Witness’ (Greek, martureo) appears 6 times in this passage, and ‘Testimony’ (Greek, marturia) appears 4 times. ‘Witness’ speaks of the one speaking, and ‘testimony’ speaks of the content of their speech. Both of these words have a common root in the Greek “Martus”, which holds both legal (as in a court of law), historical (as in being a
spectator of an event) and ethical implications (as in one who stands fast to a particular belief). The word “martyr” (one who dies for their beliefs) finds its root here.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Where are you tempted to trust a different “gospel” to save you? Work? Family? Tradition? Self-reliance? Something else? Why is that such an area of temptation?

2. As you look back on your life, what aspect of Jesus’ ministry “resume” has spoken most loudly to you in Him being the Savior?

3. What false gospels do you see people around you believing in?

Living on Mission

Does your life practically reflect a belief in the true Gospel of Jesus? Critically look at your life and repent of those areas that do not line up with the true gospel.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for opportunities to be able to be a witness for Jesus and to testify about His goodness to someone who does not know Jesus this week.
Jesus is at his absolute height of popularity. His reputation of being a miracle worker and a divinely inspired teacher has resulted in thousands of people learning from him. There are three main movements in this chapter. Movement #1 is Jesus miraculously feeding the 5000 (which some scholars project may have been upwards of 20,000 if you include women and children) with just 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Movement #2 is Jesus actually getting away from the large crowd because the people wanted him to be a political savior, which led to him performing another miracle of walking on the water as he crossed a lake. Movement #3 is Jesus teaching a very difficult, divisive teaching on Him being the Bread of Life (meaning, spiritual life vs. the physical bread that he provided the day before), that saw many of those following him desert him. In this last movement, Jesus addresses three groups of people: 1) the crowd that he fed the day before, as they followed him across the lake to Capernaum (v. 22-40); 2) the Jewish leaders, who are always complaining about Jesus no matter what he does (v. 41-59); and 3) His disciples (the 12 plus others) who still don’t fully get who Jesus is (v. 60-71).

What was this difficult, divisive teaching? Jesus taught the three groups listed above the same thing that was just hard for them to grasp:

1) Jesus came down from heaven, sent from the Father (v. 29, 33, 38, 50, 51, 57, 58, 62)  
2) Jesus is the True Bread of Life (v. 33, 35, 48, 50, 51, 58)  
3) Father gives the Son His followers (v. 37, 44, 65)  
4) Belief (faith) is the only thing that grants eternal life (v. 29, 36, 40, 47, 64)

Jesus also used some shocking imagery in talking about how one must eat his flesh and drink his blood (v. 51-58). This imagery was not in reference to the Lord’s Supper, but rather how deeply your faith in Jesus must penetrate you. A last note, we find in this passage the answer to the question regarding the salvation of Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Verses 64, 70, and 71 make it clear that Judas did not truly believe in Jesus as Savior and was, in fact, a ‘devil’ as Jesus referred to him.

This chapter does indeed hold within it some very difficult teaching that is hard to digest; it was hard for the people who heard for the first time! This teaching brought a response of “grumbling” (basically complaining because Jesus’ plan for salvation did not match their plan for salvation) and “offense” (it didn’t make them feel good, but instead caused them to think and process things that were out of their control) to its hearers. These hard teachings will cause some to leave the church, just as they did in verse 66. But for others it will drive into deeper study and deeper love for Jesus as communicated by Peter in verse 68, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” How do you respond to the Bread of Life?
Key Text to Memorize

John 6:35 “Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.””

Theology to know

Faith. Faith is the vehicle by which salvation comes to a person. Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith.” In the Greek, the words ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ both have the same root word, “peitho,” which has to do with being persuaded to put your trust & confidence in something or someone (in the Christians case, the Person and work Jesus Christ). What we see in John chapter 6, as well as in the rest of verse 8 in Ephesians 2, is that God the Father is the one who gives people faith. Faith is the gift of God given to those that God the Father brings to the Son to grant them salvation.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. After Jesus feeds the 5000, he leaves them because they wanted to force Him into being king (v. 15). Jesus confronts them after they find him in Capernaum that the only reason they are following Him is because they just want what Jesus physically provides (v. 26). What do you find yourself wanting from Jesus? How do you follow Jesus selfishly?

2. The Jewish leaders were grumbling because they didn’t understand Jesus’ teaching. What difficult teaching causes you to “grumble” because it doesn’t fit nicely into how you would like for God to operate?

3. In your opinion, what do you think is the most offensive teaching of Christianity?

Living on Mission

Jesus used a physical means (feeding the 5000) to set the stage for teaching biblical truth about himself (He’s the Bread of Life). Look for opportunities that you can use everyday situations, event, or things to illustrate and communicate who Jesus really is to a lost friend in your life.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for faith for yourself and for the lost friends in your life. Pray that you could confidently say as Peter did, “You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”
Study #15 – Mission: Identity  John 7

Overview

Chapter 7 takes place probably about 6 months after chapter 6. The events of chapter 6 were occurring around the time of Passover (6:4), which is in the spring. The main setting is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Booths (see “theology to know” below), and the events in chapter 7 take place in the fall over a period of 8 days, from the beginning of the Feast of Booths (v. 2) to the end (v. 37).

The main theme in this narrative is the age-old question of “Who is Jesus?” In John 7, there are no less than 12 varying opinions or responses to who Jesus is. The people who are shown holding these views range from Jesus’ own brothers to common folk to the Pharisees. There were some who could not get past his humanity (like his brothers and some people of Jerusalem who were familiar with Nazareth). Some Jewish leaders couldn’t get past the issue that Jesus wasn’t formally trained like they were. And still others were just confounded by the metaphorical language that Jesus used in his teaching. The bottom line is found in verse 43: “So there was a division among the people over him.”

Jesus has not ceased to be divisive, even in our day.

Key Text to Memorize

John 7:24 “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Theology to know

The Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths is also known as the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering (Leviticus 23:33-36; Deuteronomy 16:13-17; Exodus 23:16-17). The Feast of Booths occurred in the fall, according to our calendar it would fall around the second week of October. The Feast of Booths would last 8 days. This Feast commemorated 2 things: a remembrance of the Israel’s wanderings in the desert and the harvest. Tithes from the crops were brought as offerings. Jewish families would construct “tents” (or “tabernacles”) out of branches to live in during the time of the feast. If they were residents of Jerusalem, the tents would be constructed either in their courtyards or on the flat part of their roofs. Travelers would construct their tents in or around the city. This is one of the three main feasts (along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks) that required all Jewish males of age to attend to worship & sacrifice.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. What is it about Jesus that people find so confusing and divisive? (think about your answer for a minute, then look at verse 7)
2. Why did Jesus speak metaphorically so often? Why do you think he spoke plainly some times and other times he didn’t?

3. If an honestly curious person, who did not have any knowledge of Jesus or the bible, asked you “Who is Jesus?”, how would you answer? What do you think are the 4-5 most important things to communicate about Jesus?

Living on Mission

Create a spiritual conversation this week with a lost friend, neighbor, co-worker, or family member. Without trying to sell them on anything, simply find out what their view on Jesus is. In order to effectively communicate the truth of Jesus, you first need to understand the perspective of those people in your life.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for clarity. Pray that you would have clarity on who Jesus is and that you are not picking and choosing the parts that you like over the parts that you don’t. Pray for clarity for those people that you would be having spiritual conversations with about Jesus.
Overview

This story is probably one of the most well-known and beloved stories of Jesus; which is somewhat ironic because this story of the woman caught in adultery is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John, and all of the early church fathers omit this story. That being said, there is no reason to believe that this event didn’t occur, as it is consistent with the character and actions of Jesus. This story has a strong presence throughout church history and greatly illustrates the mercy of Jesus. It is on these points that we will study this passage.

There are many questions that surround this story. Who was the woman? Why wasn’t the man brought in as well? Was it a set-up? Was this woman Mary Magdalene? Who exactly caught the woman? What did Jesus write in the dirt? The answers to these questions are secondary. The primary issues to be dealt with here are how Jesus responds to 2 different groups of people: legalists and ‘sinners’.

The religious legalists, otherwise known as Scribes and Pharisees, used the woman in order to trap Jesus in a theological quandary (v. 6a). For the woman to be stoned, it would have to mean that she was betrothed and was cheating on her fiancé (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). But the scribes and Pharisees weren’t so much interested in her punishment as they were in the response of Jesus. What was Jesus’ first response to these prideful legalists? He ignores them (v. 6b). He then doesn’t enter into an exegetical argument with them; he speaks directly to their dark hearts (v. 7) and brings them to the point of conviction (v. 9). Jesus’ verbal response in verse 7 sounds hauntingly like his teaching Matthew 7:1-5.

Jesus treats the woman with an immense amount of mercy. Whether she was set up or not, she was obviously still in sin (v. 11). Jesus doesn’t excuse her sin, but rather he lovingly confronts it and calls her to repentance. Jesus says his job is not to condemn (cf. John 3:17) and anyone who believes in Jesus will not be condemned (Romans 8:1). Being shown this amount of mercy will not (or should not) lead to abuse of the mercy in order to keep sinning, but rather should result in a lifestyle of worship (Romans 12:1-2). D.A. Carson writes, “The proper response to mercy received on account of past sins is purity in the future” (The Gospel According to John, page 337).

Key Text to Memorize

John 8:11 “And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.””
Theology to know

Mercy. Mercy is simply the removal of a deserved punishment or compassion shown to a needy person. As Christ-followers, we have been shown mercy by God removing our punishment for sin, due to Jesus’ death on the cross (Romans 6:23). We have also been shown mercy in that God showed love and compassion for us while we were still in our poor, needy, sinful state (Ephesians 2:4-5). The proper response to this great mercy of God is a life lived for his glory (Romans 12:1-2).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Do you tend to be more judgmental or more merciful? Why? How have you been shown mercy?

2. What do you think is the best way to respond to a judgmental person?

3. Jesus implores the woman to stop sinning in verse 11. Why is mercy more powerful than judgment in regards to repentance of sin?

Living on Mission

You will undoubtedly have someone sin against you this week, or you will be made aware of some grievous sin of somebody’s this week. Use the opportunity to show mercy as opposed to casting judgment.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray that you will be able to show mercy because you understand how much mercy has been shown to you from God.
Study #17 – Mission: Light  John 8:12-30

Overview

Here in this passage we find the second “I Am” statement from Jesus: “I am the light of the world.” Before we look into this powerful statement, we need to take a look at what’s happening around Jesus.

As we recognize that the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) was not included in John’s original autograph, the narrative of Chapter 8 is also taking place during the great day of the Feast of Booths. John 8:20 lets us know the location of Jesus’ conversation, which is at the treasury of the temple. The treasury was most likely in the Court of Women at the temple, which was one of the most accessible areas. Also, just as there was the water ritual during the Feast, there was also a light ritual. Four massive lamps in the Court of Women were lit whose glow was seen all over Jerusalem. The lamps were lit to a chorus of singing, dancing, and the playing of the Levitical orchestras. This was the context in which Jesus makes his “light of the world” claim.

The light that Jesus is has the purpose of illumination of the soul. John 1:4 says that “in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Jesus provides the true light that illuminates what true life is; true life (full of love, joy, peace, patience, etc) is only found in the Son. Jesus also illuminates those areas of our lives that are sinful, bringing them out into the open so we can repent of them (John 3:19-20). Sadly, most people love their sin (darkness) more than they love Jesus and never gain eternal life. This was the tragedy of the Jews who rejected Jesus. The Jews loved their religion (a reflection of the Light) more than the Source, the True Light. They were unable to see that Jesus was equal to the Father (v. 19), that Jesus was the Messiah from Heaven (v. 23-24), that Jesus was the only Righteous Judge (v. 26), and that Jesus’ pure purpose was to please the Father (v. 29). All this to say that not only is Jesus the True Light Source, He is also the one and only Light. FF Bruce wrote, “…there is no other light than the light of the world.”

As Christ-followers, we reflect Jesus the True Light by doing good works that faith produces (Matthew 5:14-16). Whenever Jesus’ light is reflected by acts of kindness, goodness, hospitality, service, or evangelism, the Father is glorified and the Church fulfills its purpose as the light of the world.

Key Text to Memorize

John 8:12 ‘Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”’
Theology to know

*Light.* Light is a strong symbol in scripture, particularly in the Old Testament (which was the only scripture at the time of Jesus). Some strong OT allusions are: The glory of the presence of God in leading the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 13:21-22); the protection of the Israelites from the Egyptians (Exodus 14:19-25); the Israelites sung that God is light and salvation (Psalm 27:1); God’s Word is a light (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23); God’s light is shed in revelation and salvation (Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 26-28; Habakkuk 3:3-4); the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6); and at the end of time, the Lord Himself will be the light for his people (Isaiah 60:19-22).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Jesus says in verse 12 that following him will keep people out of darkness. What does “following Jesus” look like?

2. The Church is the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), and Jesus is the Light of the World (John 8:12). In what ways do you see the church (in general) failing to reflect Jesus? What can you do to change that?

3. As the True Light, Jesus desires to illuminate the darkness of our hearts, but part of having our darkness illuminated is also submitting to the authority of the Light as Jesus submits to the authority of the Father (v. 28). How then, is sin connected to not submitting to authority? How do you have problems with submitting to authority? What sin in your life does that show that you need to repent of?

Living on Mission

We are to reflect the light of Jesus to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) as he is the true Light of the World (John 8:12). Have your motivation for your acts of love, service, kindness, hospitality, and missional engagement come from the True Light this week. Intentionally plan and spend time with someone who is in darkness and reveal to them the True Light. Be the light that warms & illuminates, not the light that blinds & burns.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray that Jesus continues to shine on your whole life to show you those areas of your life that you try to keep hidden from him.
Overview

Jesus is still at the Feast of Booths, continuing his conversation in the temple. In this section of the narrative, Jesus reveals that he is the one in who people find true freedom. When he made this statement (verses 31-32), it was of great offense to the Jewish leaders. The Jews have a great disdain for the idea of slavery, and refused to believe that they were or had ever been slaves. This revealed how the Jews had become so deceived, so proud of their heritage as descendents of Abraham, that they denied the fact that they had been enslaved to the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Philistines, the Greeks, and at this time Israel was under Roman occupation. Not only were the Jews deceived, they were also disobedient to the scriptures that they said they treasured. Jesus called them out on not “doing what Abraham did”, namely being obedient when God spoke to him. Jesus (God in the flesh) spoke to them, but they could not bear his word, did not believe him to be the Messiah, and therefore showed their disobedience. Lastly, the Jews were headed toward destruction. Jesus confronts them on the fact that Satan is really their father, because they show no love for Jesus. And since Satan is by nature a murderer, a liar, and the father of lies, their eternal fate will be the same as his – eternal separation from God in Hell.

Key Text to Memorize

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Theology to know

Slaves to Righteousness. A complementary passage to John 8:31-47 is Romans 6:15-23. Paul delineates between a slave to sin and a slave to righteousness. As a slave to righteousness, your leader is Jesus, and your life is marked by things like sonship (John 8:35), love for God (John 8:42), obedience & response to God’s Word (John 8:39, 47), sanctification (Romans 6:19, 22), and eternal life (Romans 6:23). It is only by becoming a slave to righteousness that you experience the freedom your heart desires.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Which definition of sin makes the most sense to you and identifies best with our culture: that sin is breaking God’s rules or sin is idolatry (making a common or even a special thing an ultimate thing)? Why?

2. What do you think core differences are between an Irreligious person, a Religious person, and a Gospel-centered person? Which ones are “slaves to sin” and which ones are “slaves to righteousness”? 
3. What does freedom look like for you? How does true freedom come from slavery?

**Living on Mission**

Hearing, responding, and obeying God’s Word is a mark of being a slave to righteousness, which is, being truly free. Read through Romans 12 a few times this week and practice whatever marks of a Christ-follower resonate with you.

**Prayer Emphasis**

Thank Jesus for making you a slave to righteousness, and ask him to show you areas where you are still continuing to live in sin. Surrender those areas to him.
Jesus finishes his argument/discussion with the Jewish leaders at the end of chapter 8. They continue to accuse Jesus of being at least a fraud, and at worst demon-possessed. Jesus makes bold statements about a life lived for the glory of God and not the glory of self. Then Jesus makes one of the clearest declarations of his deity in John 5:58, saying that he indeed is eternal and that his name is “I Am” (see ‘theology to know’ section below). At this declaration of Jesus being God, the Jews prepared to stone Jesus for blaspheme, but since it wasn’t Jesus’ time to die (or method) he ducked out and left the temple with his disciples.

Chapter 9 is one of the most interesting chapters in the Gospel. As Jesus and his disciples leave the temple and pass by a blind beggar, the disciples inquire about the source of the man’s blindness. Many Jews believed that physical ailments were the result of specific sin (as opposed to original sin, which did in fact usher in all kinds of death and disease) of the person or their ancestors. Jesus said that it wasn’t either of them, but what was important now was that God will be glorified through his subsequent physical and spiritual healing. FF Bruce points out in his commentary that it isn’t that God made him blind and caused him to suffer his entire life just for this moment of healing, for that is not God’s character. Rather, Jesus sees the man, has compassion on him, and continues to “be about his Father’s business” by bringing light to the blind man’s darkened eyes and darkened soul.

Upon the man’s healing (through Jesus’ use of some spit-made mud), the man returned to his neighborhood to find confusion, disbelief, and challenge. His neighbors couldn’t believe that it was him, but as soon as he brought up Jesus’ name, they played tattle-tale and brought him to the Pharisees for questioning, apparently not wanting to accomplices in some kind of crime. During the first part of the trial, the Pharisees again hammered on Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, calling Jesus a sinner, and calling the man a liar for they did not believe that he was really blind. Then during the second part of the trial, the man’s parents are brought in to verify the man’s story of being blind from birth. Instead of rejoicing for their son’s healing and supporting him, the play the part of cowards and let him fend for himself, as they didn’t want to be excommunicated by supporting an act of Jesus. Then at the last part of the trial, the man is pressured to deny Jesus and conform to the Pharisees way of thinking and believing. But the man stuck to his story and showed the power of a testimony as his claim of “One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see” is pretty difficult to defeat by silly theological positions. The former blind man was so bewildered by their incessant questioning that he thought they were just trying to learn as much as possible about Jesus so they could follow him as well, which really made the Pharisees mad. In the end, the Pharisees couldn’t argue or overcome the power of God that brought light to the man’s eyes, and in utter frustration, they threw him out synagogue.
Jesus then finds the man, and reveals himself to be the Messiah. The man didn’t question Jesus on this at all, for he knew that only God could do the things that Jesus did and the man became a Christ-follower right then and there. Jesus then confronts the Pharisees on their “fake sight.” Jesus teaches that anyone who is convinced that they are so spiritually enlightened that they have lost sense of their spiritual need was never saved in the first place; for the closer you get to Jesus, the more you grow in your faith, you realize just how dark your heart truly is.

Key Text to Memorize

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”
John 9:25 He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

Theology to know

“I Am”. Jesus could have said in John 8:58 that “Before Abraham was, I was” and still have communicated truthfully. But he intentionally said “I Am”, which was a direct reference to God’s name as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15, and is referenced to in verses like Isaiah 43:13 and Psalm 90:2. The title “I Am” holds with the sense of eternality – that God always was and always will be. It also holds with it the sense of superiority – that God is over and above all things. For Jesus to claim this title as his own, it is a clear declaration of Him being God, which therefore prompted the Jewish leaders to stone him.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. How does the Father glorify Jesus? How do we glorify Jesus?
2. What is the importance of the name of the pool in John 9:7? How does that translate to you when God works in your life?
3. Has God used an event in your life to bring you to belief? What story do you have of Jesus working in your life that speaks louder than any theological argument?

Living on Mission

Jesus again made the statement of being the light of the world in John 9:5, and then practically provided light (sight) to a blind man which led to spiritually providing light to him as well (John 9:38). What good work can you do this week that would provide light in a practical and spiritual sense to someone in need?

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for boldness to provide light this week, and also pray for boldness to stand up for what Jesus has done for you, just like the blind man did in John 9.
Study #20– Mission: Shepherd  John 10

Overview

John 10 is a chapter with some beautiful imagery of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (in lieu of Psalm 23). It is also a chapter thick with theology, which is the thrust of this study guide.

I Am the Door of the Sheep. Sheep were kept in sheepfolds when they weren’t out to pasture. The rural sheepfolds were simple stone walls with a small opening on one side for the sheep to go in and out of. Shepherds would literally lie down in the opening at night, acting as a door so sheep couldn’t get out without his knowledge and more importantly, so that thieves couldn’t get in to steal the sheep. Thus, saying thieves and robbers have to enter by other means than the door (v. 1). More urban sheepfolds were large and held more than one flock. Even though sheep are pretty stupid animals, they are keenly aware of their own shepherd’s voice; so when they are called they respond only to their shepherd. The sheepfold is metaphorically speaking of God’s family. The only way into the family is through the door, which is Christ. This does not mean (in light of verse 3-4) that there’s a universalistic philosophy underlying here. The point of verses 3-4 is to emphasize the intimate relationship that Jesus has with his followers.

I Am the Good Shepherd. Jesus is not a bad shepherd like the Pharisees were (who just excommunicated a healed blind man in chapter 9) or who Ezekiel prophesied against in Ezekiel 34; rather, Jesus is a good shepherd who gives everything to his sheep and for his sheep. We also see in verse 11 that Jesus lays down his life for his sheep. This is a strong argument for the doctrine of election, that while Jesus did in fact die for the whole world (John 3:16), he only died in a saving way for some, namely, his own sheep. This concept is echoed in verses 14, 26, 27, and 29. Also, when Jesus says that there are other sheep “not of this fold” (verse 16), he is speaking of the Gentiles (the “fold” he is talking about here are the Jews to whom Jesus was sent). This teaches us that Jesus did die for “the world” in relation to all people-groups.

Eternal Security. Some particular denominations teach that a Christian can “fall away” and “lose their salvation.” They fail to properly deal with John 10:28-29. It is the wrong question to ask if you can lose your salvation. Jonah 2:9 clearly states that salvation belongs to God. Jesus’ teaching in John 10 that he’s the one who calls his sheep, saves his sheep, lays down his life for his sheep, knows his sheep, and ultimately has his sheep given to him by the Father, who is greater than all (verse 29). The better question is, can God lose a Christian? The answer is a resounding “NO”, for once the Father has a sheep in his hands, it is impossible to be lost (v. 29). This means that we do not truly know who true Christ-followers are, only Jesus does. If we witness someone “falling away” it means one of two things: 1) they were never truly saved; or 2) they are in a great time of rebellion, to which God will go after him, grab him by the shirt collar, and carry him back to the flock to be restored (cf. Luke 15:1-7).

Unbreakable Scripture. During the final discourse of chapter 10, found in verses 31-42, Jesus clearly states that “Scripture cannot be broken” (verse 35). The Bible is the very Word of God,
revealed to man (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Jesus himself said that he did not come to abolish the law, but rather to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17) because all of scripture is about him (Luke 24:27). The curious thing about this passage is the context in which Jesus teaches this. The Pharisees are looking to kill Jesus for blaspheme, because he said that he was God (John 10:30). In verse 34, Jesus argues some theology with them, quoting from Psalm 82:6, where seemingly, people are referred to as ‘gods’. The point that Jesus is making here actually goes back to Ezekiel 34. The Pharisees were being bad shepherds – they weren’t taking care of God’s sheep and they abused God’s law (by adding in their own laws on top of God’s). The entire context of Psalm 82 speaks of leaders (read: ‘gods’; placed in their positions by the Most High) whose job is to care for those who can’t care for themselves; i.e., sheep. Jesus called and confronted the Pharisees on the terrible job they did of caring the sheep of Israel, not recognizing the Messiah, and ignoring the heart of God’s Word in order to seek their own agenda. To see just how unbreakable scripture is, we just need to continue reading in Psalm 82:7 “nevertheless, like men you shall die.” The Pharisees did in fact die like mere, mortal men. But Jesus, whose life they tried to take, laid it down on his own terms (John 10:18), only to raise it up again, proving once and for all that He truly is God.

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 10:30 *I and the Father are one.*

**Theology to know**

See “overview” above.

**Questions to think about and discuss**

1. Read John 10:1-30. What comfort do these verses bring you? What does this say about the character of Jesus in regards to his sheep?

2. Read verses 27-29 again. What does this say about salvation?

3. Most people today question the authority of the Bible. What does Jesus address about this in verses 25 and 37-38? (what does Jesus call them to believe)

**Living on Mission**

What area have you not fully submitted to the authority of the Good Shepherd and his unbreakable word? Your mission is to admit and submit.

**Prayer Emphasis**

Pray through Psalm 23 this week.
Study #21— Mission: Life   John 11

Overview

Chapter 11 chronicles the final of Jesus’ seven recorded miracles in the Gospel of John: the raising of Lazarus. We see the clearest illustration of the power of the Gospel in this mighty work aside from Jesus’ own resurrection. We’ll simply look at the chapter as a whole to see the entire narrative play itself out.

Verses 1-6. The first six verses set up the story. We discover Jesus’ friendship with Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Their home in Bethany served as a “home base” of sorts when Jesus and his disciples were in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Lazarus and his sisters were normal people that were Jesus’ friends, which is of great encouragement to us that God just doesn’t want the rich, famous, & powerful; but rather quite the opposite. Jesus is an accessible God; a God for the everyman and woman. Jesus also reminds us in this passage that any illness is designed for the glory of God; whether in the healing of the illness or the faithfulness of the person throughout their illness.

Verses 7-16. When Jesus revealed to the disciples that they were headed back to Judea, the disciples didn’t care for the idea at all because they had just left there and the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus for his claim of being God (John 10:30-31). Jesus reminded the disciples that while he was still on earth as the light of the world, that there was much work to do. The risk that ministry can bring screams against human common sense; but not taking risks that challenge our comforts of time, energy, money, emotional investment, etc., will cause us to miss out on the deeply rewarding work of God.

Verses 17-37. Jesus finally arrives in Bethany, and Lazarus had already been in his tomb for four days. Part of Jesus’ apparent tarry in getting there may have circles around a rabbinical legend of a person’s soul hovering around the dead body for three days before going on. Jesus wanted to clearly proclaim through this miracle that he was indeed God and the power of the Gospel is unmatched — he was removing any excuse of coincidence or legend that could have diminished who he was.

We also see here Jesus interacting with both Martha and Mary. While Martha and Mary both had the exact same response (v. 21 & 32) and both deeply loved their Savior, the sisters processed their faith very differently. Martha was very pragmatic (v. 21-27) while Mary was very emotive (v. 28-33), which is very consistent with their depiction in Luke 10. The point is that no matter what your particular personality and temperament may be, you can honestly and authentically express your love for Jesus out of how he formed you and not have to fit into somebody else’s mold or expectation.
It is in this section that Jesus reveals himself as the Resurrection and the Life (“I Am” #5). Jesus is the only one who has the power to breathe life into a dead soul. Nothing is beyond his ability to heal, fix, or repair.

**Verses 38-44.** Jesus previewed this whole story in verse 4 by saying that God will be glorified, which is repeated in verses 40 and 42. But God was most glorified in the raising of Lazarus (although he was indeed glorified in that); God was most glorified in the belief of the people – in trust that was placed in Jesus. This is what Jesus said clearly in verses 40 and 42 – the point of the miracle was to produce belief, and it is only in belief that new life is given to a dead soul (see Ephesians 2:1-8).

**Verses 45-57; John 12:9-11.** The narrative ends with the result of Jesus’ great miracle of raising Lazarus. The Jewish leaders’ fear is finally clearly exposed (v. 48) and the plan on how to kill Jesus is now put into overdrive (v. 53). Verses 54-57 depict the tension that permeated throughout the region, everyone was talking about Jesus and wondered what his, as well as the Jewish leaders, next move would be. John 12:9-11 tell us part of the Jewish leader’s next move was: to remove evidence of Jesus’ power through the killing of Lazarus.

This is the turning point of John’s Gospel. Beginning in chapter 12, John chronicles the last week of Jesus’ life; a week that seemed to end on a bloody cross, but in reality ended with a triumphant raising of Jesus Himself from his own tomb.

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”*

**Theology to know**

Resurrection. It is important to note that Lazarus was not given a “resurrection body” like Jesus had after his own resurrection. Lazarus was able to die again, whereas Jesus was not. Jesus’ resurrection body also didn’t conform to some natural laws of physics, as he was able to walk through walls. Christ-followers are promised a new body that will last for eternity as we enjoy the direct presence of God forever (see 1 Corinthians 15) This resurrection body is given at the end of time when Jesus comes back to judge the world and separate those who reject him from those who love him (see Revelation 20 & 21).

**Questions to think about and discuss**

1. Do you live with a sense of urgency in your life like Jesus did (v. 9-10)? Why or why not?

2. Martha and Mary both knew that Jesus could have healed Lazarus and prevented his death (v. 21 & 32); which infers that they thought that he was now beyond a work that even Jesus could do. Is there a situation or a relationship in your life that you feel is
beyond repair? What is it? What is keeping you from trusting Jesus to still perhaps make it right?

3. Jesus illustrates his power to bring life from death. Have you grappled with the depth of sin in your heart that Jesus has saved you from? How big is the cross in your life? (see Luke 7:47)

Living on Mission

We do not know how much time we or anybody else has on this planet. In the spirit of John 11:9-10 (cf. John 9:4-5), if there has been any opportunity or desire you have to advance the Gospel through a verbal testimony or act of service, do it now!

Prayer Emphasis

Read Ephesians 2:1-8 and thank God for breathing new life into you and making you truly alive.
Study #22– Mission: Anoint John 12:1-8

Overview

We are now in the last week of Jesus’ life. What we’ll see is that everyone who has followed Jesus was oblivious to the fact that Jesus’ death was imminent, except for one person. Jesus is back at Bethany, but not in the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus as usual. Mark 14 tells us that the house that this “thank you party for Jesus” is happening in is Simon (a leper that Jesus had healed). This is also the third time that the Passover is mentioned in John, which allows us to put Jesus’ public ministry at three years.

As people reclined around the dinner table, most likely after the meal, Mary comes in and breaks open a very expensive jar of nard (an ointment or perfume made from a Himalayan herb) and anoints both Jesus head (Mark 14:3) and his feet (John 12:3), using her own hair to wipe up the excess. The use of her hair was important, for in this culture a woman’s hair was known as her ‘glory’. What Mary does is present Jesus with the very best of her possession and he person.

Judas spoke out against the act. He felt that it was a waste of resources that could have been used to aid the poor. But Judas is only portraying a sensitive, caring image. The reality is that Judas was a thief and wanted the money for himself, as he regularly stole from the disciples’ common moneybag. This illustrates what Jesus said of Judas in John 6:70-71, that he indeed is “a devil” and was never a believer in Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus reveals that Mary had indeed anointed him for his burial. The times that we see Mary throughout the Gospels, she is always at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:39; John 11:32; John 12:3). Some commentators suggest that because she spent such intense time at Jesus’ feet that she was more in tune with what was about to happen, for she wasn’t busying herself or distracted. Jesus said that she had done a good and took advantage of an opportunity that would only present itself once. Jesus contrasted Mary’s act with helping the poor, who, according to scripture, will always be around (Deuteronomy 15:11).

Key Text to Memorize

John 12:8 “The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

Theology to know

Anointing. Anointing with some type of perfumed oil or ointment is a common practice we see all throughout scripture. The purposes of anointing was for either: 1) the consecration of something or someone as being holy or set apart for God, 2) as an act of hospitality for guests in a home, 3) for medical purposes in praying for and healing the sick, 4) to prepare a body for burial, or for 5) refreshment of one’s body. People would typically anoint the head, the eyes,
the face, or the feet of another. It is a beautiful, symbolic practice in showing love and presenting someone to the Lord.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. All in the story were gathered at Simon’s house to celebrate and thank Jesus for what he had done in their lives. When was the last time you stopped and celebrated what God has done for you? Stop and list at least 3 significant things that Jesus has done for you in the last 6 months.

2. What is your most valuable possession? What would you consider to be the ‘glory’ of your person? How can you fully present these to Jesus?

3. Mary was very consistent in her character and her worship of Jesus. Judas was very inconsistent and lived a double life. What are the inconsistencies in your life that you need to confess and repent of? How can you be more consistent like Mary was?

Living on Mission

What opportunity for the Gospel is set before you, that if you don’t take it now, you might not have the opportunity again? Take that opportunity to speak, act, and love.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray that you would have a consistent character of worship about you like Mary did. Pray for protection against inconsistency.
Study #23– Mission: Coronation  John 12:12-50

Overview

The events in John 12:12-50 are those which happened on the day we commonly call “Palm Sunday.” Jesus enters Jerusalem in humble fashion, riding on a donkey and is given a parade fit for a king – which is exactly what the people wanted him to be. Their cries of “Hosanna” (lit. ‘save now’) were directed to “the King of Israel”; they wanted a flesh and blood king to kick out the Romans and rule – not the King of a spiritual kingdom that Jesus was bringing.

In verses 20-26, we see the international appeal that Jesus had. Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to watch the Passover events on their own quest for truth sought an audience with Jesus. Upon the grand national reception and international appeal that Jesus had, he didn’t disappoint with his first statement, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (v. 23). But then the bottom drops out as Jesus begins speaking in terms of death being the only way to true life. This is consistent with the paradoxical imagery of the Kingdom of God. Those who seek to lead must serve, those who want to be first should be last, those who want to be strong must be weak, etc. The only way for us to enjoy the fullness of the Gospel is for each one of us to die to ourselves (our wants, desires, plans, preferences, etc) and allow Jesus’ life to fully reign.

Jesus then goes on to explain that no matter the weight of responsibility that lies before him, he will stay strong and focused on his purpose: to glorify the Father by becoming the substitutionary, atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. Jesus promises that as he is “lifted up” (lit. “out from”) from the earth – both on the cross and out from the tomb (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19) – that we will be the one to draw all people to himself. It is only the clear proclamation of Jesus, God the Son, dying in our place for our sin that result in authentic faith.

John explains in verses 36-43 why “all people” do not come to faith in Jesus. He does this by looking at the history of the Jews, specifically through the words of Isaiah. John points out that people wouldn’t believe (v. 37), that they couldn’t believe (v. 38-39), and that they shouldn’t believe (v. 39-40). The people’s lack of belief is due to their constant rejection of Jesus due to their love of the praise of man rather than being accepted by God (v. 43).

The people’s unbelief is not at all what Jesus desires. In verse 44, Jesus is “crying out” for the people to believe. Jesus explains that he had come to bring peace and salvation between God and man (v. 45-47); but that the day will come when he returns when Jesus will come not in peace, but in war, bringing judgment on all those who have rejected him (v. 48-50) (cf. Revelation 19:11-21; 20:11-15).

Key Text to Memorize

John 12:32 “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”
Theology to know

Substitutionary Atonement. Substitutionary Atonement means that Jesus bore our sins and died in our place, thereby satisfying the penalty for sin and absorbing God’s wrath toward sin, all while showing us the ultimate act of love (John 15:13). This doctrine is central to the Gospel message, for if you try to remove or lessen this doctrine, you are left with nothing but a works-based religion based on a man who did nothing but die for an “idea” rather than dying for sin. Supporting passages for substitutionary atonement are: Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; and 1 Peter 2:24.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. John writes his gospel in hindsight (John 12:16), only being able to understand events by looking back. When was a time that you didn’t understand how God was working in your life until you were able to look back down the road?

2. What areas of your life do you find it easiest to “die to”? Which areas are the most difficult to “die to”? What makes it so difficult?

3. How have you seen our nation become blind, deaf, and hard-hearted to Jesus? What about the church? What about you?

Living on Mission

Mission starts in your heart. It starts with you dying to yourself and living only to Jesus. Where do you need to die?

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for the ability to remain focused on the mission of the Gospel like Jesus was. Pray for strength to endure any hardship that could and would come your way.

Overview

We will overview this passage by also cross-referencing Luke 22, so as to get the full thrust of the narrative.

Luke 22:1-2 and John 13:1 gives us the context of the narrative. It is the week of the Passover celebration (or Fest of Unleavened Bread) in which the Jews came to Jerusalem to remember their deliverance from slavery in Egypt, ate the Passover meal (or Seder), and sacrificed an animal (typically an unblemished lamb). There were upwards of 250,000+ animals that were sacrificed during the Passover in the Temple, plus a great number of animals used for work and travel as around 2-3 million people flocked to Jerusalem for the Feast.

Luke 22:3-6 shows us that upon Jesus & the Disciples arrival to Jerusalem, Judas was possessed by Satan himself. Judas then went to the chief priests, making a deal with them to betray Jesus for the price of 30 pieces of silver.

Luke 22:7-13 tells us how Peter and John were sent by Jesus to secure a borrowed room for them to celebrate the Passover meal. Luke 22:14-23 goes on to describe how Jesus transforms the Passover Meal into the Lord’s Supper. Jesus also lets the cat out of the bag that one of them would betray him (cf. John 13:2), which sparked quite the debate among the disciples.

Curiously, in Luke 22:24, as the disciples were arguing about who would betray him, it sparked another argument about who was the greatest among them. This probably came from the midst of their previous argument, as each of them made their case of who was most loyal, least likely to betray, and therefore be the greatest. Jesus says a few words about what true greatness is (Luke 22:25-27) and then shows them what he’s talking about.

John 13:3-12 chronicles one of the most beloved events in Jesus’ life, him washing the disciples’ feet. This was a terribly dirty job. First, it was 12 guys, most of them being blue-collar guys who didn’t have hygiene high on their priority list. Secondly, they walked everywhere. This was the Middle East, so there’s plenty of dust, dirt and mud around on top of all the animal waste the 250,000+ animals produce. Typically, there was a servant specifically assigned to wash the feet of guests, but as this was a borrowed room, there was no servant. The job should have fallen on the first to arrive, which in this case was Peter and John who prepared the room, but they failed in this responsibility. Jesus then puts his teaching (Luke 22:27) into action and takes the role of a servant and washes the disciples’ feet – including those of his betrayer, Judas.

In verses 10-11, Jesus uses the “cleansing” illustration to instruct us on salvation and repentance. If a person is “completely clean”, i.e., saved (or regenerate), the only thing they need to do is “wash their feet” (i.e., repent of sins of omission and commission). Peter
repented and submitted to Jesus washing his feet. Judas, on the other hand, was never clean to begin with.

In John 13:12-17, Jesus instructs the disciples to live by his example. Being a follower of Jesus isn’t just what you know (v. 17), but it is a life that is lived in humility before God and service to others.

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 13:14-15 “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

**Theology to know**

*Regeneration.* In John 13:10 Jesus alludes to the doctrine of regeneration. We see this explicitly mentioned in Titus 3:4-6. Regeneration literally means “new birth”; speaking of what happens to a person when they receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. I Corinthians 5:17; John 3:5; Ezekiel 36:25-26).

**Questions to think about and discuss**

1. Judas was among those whose feet got washed by Jesus. How would you want to treat someone who is your enemy or has betrayed you? What do you think Jesus was thinking as he washed Judas’ feet?

2. John 13:10 talks about regeneration (see ‘theology to know’) and repentance (washing of feet). What does repentance look like for you? How often do you repent? Is there a specific sin that you repeatedly repent of that has you in bondage?

3. Jesus did what he did to give us an example on how to live as his followers (John 13:15). Why is it so difficult to serve with humility? Is it possible to serve without humility?

**Living on Mission**

Identify 2-3 ways that you could take the role of a servant in each area of your life: family, church, work, friends, neighborhood, etc.

**Prayer Emphasis**

Pray that the Spirit would reveal to you where pride has taken root in your life. Pray for the strength to take active humility to defeat that pride.
Overview

In this passage, we have Jesus giving his followers a clear commandment to love. And Jesus gives this commandment at seemingly the oddest of times: right after he revealed his betrayer and right before he predicted his closest friend’s denial.

By Jesus giving this “new” commandment to love right in the middle of a betrayal and a denial, Jesus once again exemplifies what true love really is – it serves, it sacrifices, and it’s even shown to those who are your enemies. But what is “new” about this command to love? In Mark 12, Jesus is asked what the top priority is in following God, and he quotes from Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 18 about loving God and loving your neighbor. So love really isn’t a new concept at all. But now, as a Christ-follower who is indwelt with the Holy Spirit now has for the first time in history to literally take part in and reflect the loving community of the Trinity. So when Christ-followers love each other as Jesus did, they show the world how the Father, the Son, and the Spirit love each other.

From our perspective, a seemingly unworthy character was a recipient of Jesus’ love – Judas. Jesus had always known that Judas would be his betrayer (v. 18), for it was prophesied. But even after Jesus publically announced that he would be betrayed, Jesus does not publically announce that it was Judas; rather, he does so privately with John when asked (v. 25-26). This protects Judas from a certain beat down by the rest of the disciples.

Another character who enjoyed Jesus’ perfect love was Peter. Although Peter was told by Jesus that he would deny his three times (v. 38) and show his unfaithfulness, Jesus remained faithful to Peter. Human nature desires to turn your back on those who turn their backs on you, but Jesus believed in Peter and had a greater plan for him, as he restored him three times in John 21.

Key Text to Memorize

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Theology to know

Prophecy. Prophecy can be defined as “miracle of knowledge, a declaration or description or representation of something future, beyond the power of human sagacity to foresee, discern,
or conjecture.\textsuperscript{1} Nothing about Jesus life was mere chance, even his betrayal. Jesus quotes from Psalm 41:9, a lament psalm written by David during a time when he was being mocked by his enemies in the midst of a terrible, life threatening illness. David didn’t necessarily pen that entire psalm as Messianic, although that particular verse was (e.g., Psalm 41:4 is in no way about Jesus, for he is sinless). The point is that God has ordained a plan for his glory, and like Jesus did, we need to submit to the Father’s word and will.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. What do you think is Jesus’ greatest act of love in this passage? Why? What does his act of love tell you about your own heart?

2. Why do you think that none of the disciples suspected Judas as the betrayer?

3. What are some practical ways that Christ-followers need to love each other? What in your life needs to change so you can love your church community like Jesus desires?

Living on Mission

Choose three people at church that you are going to love in an intentional way this week. Write down their names, the way in which the Holy Spirit is leading you to show love to them, and when you plan on doing it.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for a heart to love like Jesus loved, even in the face of betrayal and unfaithfulness.

\textsuperscript{1}Easton, M.G.: \textit{Easton’s Bible Dictionary}. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, c1897
Overview

Coming into the chapter, Jesus had shared his last meal with his disciples, revealed his betrayer, and told his closest friend and follower that he would deny even knowing Jesus. These things, along with the difficult and somewhat divisive teaching that Jesus began around chapter 6, lay heavy on the disciples. So with his great pastoral heart, Jesus begins chapter 14 with the famous words, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” Jesus begins to encourage the disciples.

First, he encourages them that although he is leaving to be with the Father, he is preparing a place for those who love him to live with him forever. Next, he encourages them by giving the clear direction on the way to eternal life in the form of his 6th “I am” statement: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” He then encourages them by once again by letting them know that he is indeed the embodiment of the Father who loves them. Further, he encourages them by telling them that they will be able to do the same work that he had been doing during his earthly ministry. Finally, he encourages them that they can pray to the Father in Jesus’ name and receive whatever they ask for (that is, those requests that are gospel-centered; don’t expect God to drop $1 million in your lap).

But the greatest encouragement that Jesus gives his disciples is in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The reason that it’s better for Jesus to leave them is so the Holy Spirit can come and indwell Christ-followers, fulfilling what the prophet Joel wrote in Joel 2:28-29 as well as what the prophet Ezekiel wrote about in Ezekiel 36:25-27 when God promised the New Covenant. In our passage, Jesus communicates 10 activities of the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit will be with us forever (John 14:16)
2. The Holy Spirit leads us into truth (John 14:17, 26; 16:13)
3. The Holy Spirit connects us to the Trinity (John 14:17; 16:15)
4. The Holy Spirit gives us peace (John 14:27)
5. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus & helps us do the same (John 15:26-27)
6. The Holy Spirit strengthens our faith in hard times (John 16:1-4)
7. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8-9)
8. The Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness (John 16:8, 10)
9. The Holy Spirit convicts of judgment (John 16:8, 11)
10. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus (John 16:14)

Key Text to Memorize

John 14:16 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.”
Theology to know

*Indwelling.* As stated above, God promised the indwelling of His Holy Spirit in his followers through the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:27). This indwelling (or baptism) comes at the moment of salvation, which is by placing our faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 3:14). The body of a Christ-follower therefore becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). If a person does not have the Holy Spirit living within them, they are not a Christian (Romans 8:9; 1 John 4:13). The proof of the Holy Spirit living inside of a person is the evidence of spiritual fruit in their lives as they become more like Jesus (Galatians 5:22-23). Indwelling is permanent (John 14:15), and is different from being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Christ-followers get “filled with the Spirit” as the result of particular times of worship or fellowship for the purpose of accomplishing ministry or evangelistic needs and to strengthen the Christ-followers journey of sanctification. This filling of the Spirit is not a separate “baptism of the Spirit”, for again, that happens at the moment of salvation (Ephesians 4:4-5).

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Is there something troubling your heart that you need Jesus’ encouragement?

2. In light of John 14:13-14, what limitations do you think exist in making requests to the Father? How do people abuse these verses?

3. Which activity of the Holy Spirit is most encouraging to you? Why?

Living on Mission

Who do you know that’s going through a hard time right now and their “heart is troubled”? Which activity of the Holy Spirit would encourage them most?

Prayer Emphasis

Jesus said that whatever we ask in his name the Father will give us. What requests do you have that are honestly gospel-centered? Go ahead and ask your Father.
Study #27– Mission: Connect  John 15:1-17

Overview

Jesus begins this teaching with his final “I Am” statement...that he is the true vine (meaning, the only vine on which we’ll really grow as we’re meant to). God the Father’s job is that of the “vinedresser”, or the one who tends the plant and keeps it healthy (like a farmer). Jesus continues the illustration by calling his followers the branches. The job of the branch is to “bear fruit” (v. 2). The fruit that Jesus is talking about is primarily spiritual maturity (cf. Galatians 5:22-23), but evangelistic fruit is also inferred. The only way to bear this type of fruit is to stay connected to the vine, where the branch and the fruit find all of their nourishment. This is why Jesus says that “apart from me you can do nothing”; for spiritual fruit (both in maturity and salvation) is produced by Christ alone. It is also worthy to note that because of God’s love for his branches, he “prunes” them – that is, cuts back things that will hinder a fruitful harvest. The cutting may be painful in the immediate sense, but in the long run will bring much blessing.

The question now becomes, “How does one stay abiding in Jesus?” In short, Jesus says that we are to rest in his love (v. 9) and share his love with others (v. 13). We rest in Jesus’ love by remembering the work of the Gospel in our lives, connecting to God through our spiritual pathways (check out Gary Thomas’ book “Sacred Pathways”), and exercising spiritual disciplines (check out John Ortberg’s book “The Life You’ve Always Wanted”). We share Jesus’ love by verbally sharing the Gospel with others, serving others, making friends (with believers and non-believers), and sacrificing for others.

It is important to note that the Christ-followers job is not to “produce” fruit...that job belongs to the Holy Spirit. The job of the Christ-follower is to abide in Jesus and bear the fruit (v. 16). That is Jesus’ vision for his followers: a healthy, growing relationship with Him that helps transform the lives of those around them.

Key Text to Memorize

John 15:5  “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Theology to know

Election. Jesus clearly states in verse 15, “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” The doctrine of election can be simply summed up as: God saves sinners who can’t save themselves. Because of our sin, we are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), we suppress God’s truth (Romans 1:18), and do not seek God (Romans 3:11). Therefore, we are in need of God to draw us to Jesus (John 6:44) and give us faith (Ephesians 2:8). We see God’s work of electing throughout scripture, beginning with choosing a pagan named Abram in Genesis 12, continuing with his chosen nation of Israel, and now onto His church; all along granting salvation to those whom he
wills (John 5:21). Jesus consistently refers to those who believe in him as those whom the Father has given to him. The Apostle Paul tackles this doctrine in detail in Romans 5-9 and Ephesians 1-2:10. The main emphasis when it comes to the doctrine of election is not to boast in being “chosen”; but rather to be extremely humble for the grace that God has shown you.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Do you feel connected to Jesus? Should being connected to Jesus involve more than feelings? How do you practically stay connected to Jesus?

2. Describe a time in your life that God pruned you in order for you to grow.

3. Other than literally giving you life for someone, what are some other ways to show great love by “laying down your life for your friends“?

Living on Mission

Missional living begins and ends with a loving, abiding relationship with Jesus, for without Him we can do nothing (v. 5). Spend some intentional time this week getting connected to Jesus by exercising some spiritual disciplines in the context of your spiritual pathway (if you are unfamiliar with these terms, please contact us at info@deltachurch.net).

Prayer Emphasis

Thank Jesus for him laying down his life for you and for being faithful in keeping you connected to him. Ask him for the desire and the strength to abide in his love.
Study #28– Mission: Reconcile  John 15:18-16:4

Overview

Jesus communicates some jarring truths in this section. Fully following Jesus will bring hatred and persecution from the world into your life. In this instance, “the world” is referring to the values and systems held by those who are not in Christ. John clearly defines “the world” in 1 John 2:16: “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.” Also, the language of verse 18 (“if the world hates you…”) is actually denoting a certainty of fact. Verse 18 would be better translated as “when the world hates you…” We have a promise that our Kingdom values will be in direct opposition to the world’s values and that will bring on some form of persecution—hatred, mockery, gossip, and even death.

The heart of this passage is verses 26-27. Jesus emphasizes that the mission of his followers is to testify (Greek: martureo, “to bear witness, give a good report) to the world about Jesus. The Father and the Son send the Spirit to draw people to Jesus, and Christ-followers partner with the Spirit in the proclamation of the Gospel (Romans 10:14-17). As we were once enemies of God who are now reconciled to God through the finished work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10), we as citizens of the City of God are to bring the message of reconciliation to the City of Man, who are enemies of God and His followers (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The church is not to become an inward focused, self-protecting huddle, but rather go into enemy territory armed with a message of love and peace.

It is important to note that this sobering teaching comes sandwiched between Jesus’ teaching on the importance of staying connected to the Vine (John 15:1-17) and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (15:26-16:15). Jesus knows that this mission of reconciliation is impossible without living a completely dependent life in Jesus. The world is not ours to condemn, but it is ours to show compassion to, because the world’s need for Jesus is so great.

Key Text to Memorize

John 15:26-27 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

Theology to know

Reconciliation. Romans 5:6-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 teach that God has reconciled himself to Christ-followers, and that Christ-followers are to act as ambassadors to a lost, hurt, and dying world, bringing a message of reconciliation. But the idea of reconciliation is deeper than making peace; it actually has more to do balancing your checkbook. The Greek word translated ‘reconciliation’ is “katallage”, meaning ‘the adjustment of a difference.’ If your checkbook
registers $200 in your account, but your bank statement says you only have $100, you have to reconcile, or balance, the difference. When God reconciled us to himself through Jesus, we had the shortfall and we couldn’t make up the difference ourselves. Jesus stepped in and reconciled us to the Father, he made up our shortfall!

Questions to think about and discuss

1. When was a time that you experienced a form of hatred from people because of your faith in Jesus (persecution, mockery, gossip, etc.)? How did you respond to it?

2. Would you say that you are more known by what you stand for or what you stand against? Which position seems to draw the most hatred & persecution from the world? Why do you think so?

3. How are you to live in light of hatred & persecution (see 15:26-27)? How is this possible? What are some practical things you can do to help achieve this?

Living on Mission

What person in your life is most opposed to faith in Jesus? Commit to intentionally pray for that person every day for 1 month, asking the Holy Spirit to soften their heart. Look for practical ways to love and serve this person.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for strength and perspective in the face of hatred and persecution. Ask Jesus to give you the proper words to say when faced with opposition to your faith in Jesus.
Study #29— Mission: Joy  John 16:16-33

Overview

Jesus now enters into a conversation with the disciples regarding his death, resurrection, and the period of time between the two events (v. 16). Jesus makes a striking contrast to how the world (Greek: “kosmos”, in this case meaning the sinful values and systems of the world and the people that hold to them) and the disciples will respond. The world rejoices in the death of God while the disciples ‘weep and lament’ (v. 20). This is not different to the state of our world today. The more the active presence of God and biblical values is removed from our culture, the “world” rejoices in its progress, while the church mourns. But Jesus emphasizes that the disciples’ sorrow will be short-lived due to his resurrection. At the end of this section, Jesus provides perhaps the shortest description of the Gospel (v. 33): “I have overcome the world.”

Jesus outlines to his disciples the things that attempt to ‘steal’ their joy (v. 22): loss of human leadership (v. 16); confusion about truth (v. 17-19); sorrow (v. 20); and pain (v. 21). While these things are very real in our lives, they cannot be afforded to cast a shadow over the hope of the Gospel. This is the direction that Jesus takes his teaching in verses 23-33. In verses 23-24, Jesus teaches what the foundation of joy truly is, and then goes on to teach on how to build on that foundation. Interestingly, he uses the language of prayer to communicate the foundation of joy. After the resurrection, followers of Jesus are allowed direct access to the Father to present their prayers of petition, and Jesus says that we are to “ask of the Father in my name.” This does not simply mean to tag the end of every prayer with “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” Rather, this means that our prayers are to be Gospel-centered prayers with Jesus’ will and character the main focus of our prayers. Without Jesus’ will and character in the center of our prayers, they become prayers of self-interest, simply seeking comfort and short-sighted, fleeting happiness. So what Jesus says is the foundation of joy here is trust in the goodness and sovereignty of who God is; or to say it simply, “God is our joy.”

Jesus then teaches on building on this foundation by growing in our love for the Father as he has first loved us (v. 25-28), experiencing clarity of truth given by the Holy Spirit and Scripture (v. 29-30), being humble before God and being humbled by God to purify and strengthen our faith (v. 31-32), experiencing peace (shalom) that only the Gospel provides (v. 33a), and celebrating and living the victory that Jesus has already accomplished (v. 33b). So what we see here is the Gospel at work. Our faith in our good and sovereign Lord Jesus justifies us (the foundation of joy), and our growth as Christ-followers sanctifies us and builds our joy.

Key Text to Memorize

John 16:20 “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”
John 16:33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Theology to know

Shalom. In verse 33, Jesus speaks of his desire for those who love him to have peace. We need to first recognize that true peace can only come from the Gospel. Secondly, the peace that Jesus is talking about is rooted in the Hebrew word “shalom”. “Shalom” does indeed mean peace, but it is deeper than simply the absence of conflict. “Shalom” means also the active presence of contentment, tranquility, and completeness. With a relationship with Jesus as the center of our lives, we can experience peace (shalom) even in the face of tension.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. To which area do you most likely go to in your pursuit of joy – people, things, or circumstances? How long does the joy or happiness last from these sources?

2. Jesus talks about “joy stealers” in verses 16-22: circumstances & people that you make more important than Jesus, loss of leadership & direction, confusion about truth (mainly due to un-asked questions), sorrow, and pain. Which of these “joy stealers” most affects you? How do you typically respond to them?

3. Jesus goes on to teach what the true foundation of joy is and how to build on it. Having faith in Him and His sovereignty (v. 23-24) is the true foundation, and we build on it by growing in our love for the Father, gaining clarity of truth through his word, being humble before God, experiencing the peace of God, and living in the victory of sin that Jesus provides. Which area needs the most strengthening in your life right now? How can your church community help you grow?

Living on Mission

Find a trusted friend or leader and confess the idols in your life to which you run to for joy – people, things, or circumstances. Ask them to encourage you toward building your joy on Jesus alone.

Prayer Emphasis

Be thoughtful in how you pray, making sure to pray in light of Jesus’ character and will; not praying to simply receive things that will provide you or others temporary comfort or happiness. This is how you truly “pray in Jesus’ name” so that your “joy may be full”!
Study #30– Mission: Pray John 17

Overview

John 17 is the final scene of Jesus and his disciples in the upper room. When Jesus leaves the upper room, he will be walking straight into the most agonizing event that any person in history would experience: betrayal, arrest, and death by crucifixion while bearing the sin of the entire world on his shoulders while his Father turns away from him. So what do we find Jesus doing in the advent of immense suffering? Where do we see Jesus run to in hopes of finding comfort? We find him praying.

Not only is this the longest prayer we have of Jesus, it is also the longest prayer we have in all of scripture. There are three sections to the prayer:

1. Verses 1-5. Jesus prays for himself in the opening section of the “High Priestly Prayer.” The two main subthemes of this section are glorifying God and the clearest definition of what eternal life is (v. 2-3).
2. Verses 6-19. In the second section of the prayer, Jesus prays for his disciples. Jesus emphasizes God’s sovereignty in the process of belief (v. 6-13), which interestingly also includes the sovereign plan that included Judas’ betrayal (v. 12). Jesus also specifically prays for the missional plan and purpose for his disciples (v. 14-19). It was never God’s desire for His church to be a “holy huddle” or “frozen chosen” that never engaged the lost and dying world and sat back in judgment and condemnation for how ungodly the world is. God’s plan for the church centered on joining God in his work of redeeming the world by engaging it with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the only true hope the world has.
3. Verses 20-26. In the last section of Jesus’ prayer, he prays for future followers. The two things he prays for are the exact things that tear the church apart and damage the church’s witness to the world: unity and love. We see today’s church in a fractured state between the major branches (Catholic, Orthodox, & Protestant) and a myriad of denominations. We also see today’s church typically characterized and stereotyped as mean, judgmental, unloving people who seemingly can’t wait to shoot their own when Christians struggle and get caught up in sin. Jesus’ desire was that his church would be a witness of love to the world and show tremendous unity centered on the Gospel that would reflect the Trinity.

Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer” of John 17 is not only a tremendous model for how we should pray, but also a great encouragement on how we should live.

Key Text to Memorize

John 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”
Theology to know

Prayer. Many people misunderstand prayer. Jesus gave us a clear model for prayer in the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15), and taught us that we will receive great joy by praying in his name – i.e., according to his character and will – as we place our faith in the goodness and grace of the Father (John 16:23-24). As we submit our will to the Father’s will, what we find is that our prayers are not to get God to do things for us or give us things like he’s some sky genie waiting to grant wishes. We also find that the point of our prayers is not to change God’s mind (like we, the creation, would have that ability over the Creator). Rather, the point of praying is to mold our will and desires to God’s and for us to change to reflect the heart of the Father.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. How would you define God’s glory? How important is God’s glory to you? How important do you think it is to him?
2. What is your general attitude toward “the world” – condemnation or compassion? Who and where are you intentionally engaging missionally with the Gospel in word and deed?
3. What are some practical ways that you can promote love and unity among all Christ-followers?

Living on Mission

Identify a secular organization or group in your city that works with something you are passionate about (the poor, professional development, sports, etc). Intentionally join that organization to contribute to its work to bring a Gospel presence there.

Prayer Emphasis

Make a practice to begin every prayer by submitting your will to the Father and asking that he and his purposes would be glorified.
Study #31– Mission:Death John 18 & 19

Overview

John 18 & 19 are two of the most intense chapters in all of scripture. It is important to immerse yourself in the narrative of the passages, place yourself in Gethsemane, in the court of the High Priest and of Pilate, and most importantly, at the foot of the cross. Read these chapters and ask Jesus to give you understanding of the weight of his sacrifice for you.

Key Text to Memorize

John 19:30 “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Questions to think about and discuss

1. Whom do you seek? This is a common question throughout chapter 18. Peter sought living in his own strength and finding his own comfort. The High Priest sought control rather than submission to God. Pilate sought so much knowledge that his heart was never affected. Whom, or what, do you seek?

2. What event or interchange strikes you most from chapter 19?
Chapter 20 is a glorious chapter, for Jesus has risen from the dead! Death had no hold of him. The power and the promise of God is championed. Our Rescuer – the One who was fully man and fully God – who stood in our place to pay for our sin and absorb the wrath of God has come and finished His work. The literal, physical resurrection of Jesus is what makes our faith real (1 Corinthians 15:14). And this is of utmost importance: Christianity is not based on myth or legend, but on fact – the fact the Jesus lived, the fact that Jesus died, the fact that Jesus was buried, and the fact that Jesus rose from the grave and ascended to heaven. Christianity is not an idea or suggestions on how to live a better life, in hopes of a happy eternity. Christianity is a response to an event – specifically a person – in history. John 20 shows how a number of people responded to this event:

1. Peter and John “saw and believed” (v. 8). The confusion they experienced was suddenly transformed into clarity based on the resurrection.
2. Mary Magdalene “went and announced” (v. 18). Her despair over the loss of Jesus was transformed into confidence due to His resurrection.
3. The Disciples “were glad” (v. 20). Their collective fear (of being hunted down and have wasted three years of their lives) was transformed into joy because of the resurrection.
4. Thomas cried out “my Lord and my God” (v. 28). His doubt (for he had not seen Jesus when the other disciples had) was instantly transformed into conviction because of the resurrection.

Jesus also had some very important responses for his followers upon his resurrection. He comforts them, blesses them with peace, sends them on their mission of spreading the Gospel, and emphasizes the importance of faith.

At the end of chapter 20, John provides us with the purpose of his Gospel. The sole purpose for his writing is to help people believe that Jesus is God, the Savior; and that faith in Jesus is what provides people the life that they are truly looking for.

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 20:21 “Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

John 20:31 “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
Theology to know

*Jesus the Chief Shepherd.* Peter calls Jesus the “Chief Shepherd” in 1 Peter 5:4 (specifically meaning that Jesus is the only true Senior Pastor of the church). Part of being a shepherd means gently caring for your flock. We see Jesus in John 20 caring for his followers, providing them just what they need. He specifically ministered to Mary Magdalene, the disciple’s, and then individually to Thomas. Even today, through the Holy Spirit and his Word, Jesus continues specifically care for his followers.

Questions to think about and discuss

1. What is significant about viewing Christianity as a response to an actual event rather than an idea or suggestion on how to live better?

2. Which character’s response do you most identify with: Peter & John’s, Mary Magdalene’s, the Disciple’s, or Thomas’? Why?

3. How do you need to respond to the reality of the resurrection?

Living on Mission

Who in your life is living in confusion, despair, sorrow, or doubt? How can you best share the gospel with them to help provide them clarity, confidence, joy, or conviction?

Prayer Emphasis

Pray a prayer of worship and thanks to Jesus for his resurrection!
Overview

Chapter 21 is in essence an epilogue of Jesus’ life; in it we discover what the main characters did after his resurrection. John 20:30-31 are clear in communicated the purpose of the Gospel (to bring about knowledge and faith in Jesus as God), and John 21 encourages us that our faith is to be lived out. In this final chapter, we see themes of obedience, work, shepherding (or pastoring), discipleship, and even suffering.

The opening scene (v. 1-14) finds the disciples, in essence, “killing time” while waiting for Jesus to come to them in Galilee as was told to them (as recorded in Matthew 28:7). Seven of the disciples (most notably Peter, whom other than Jesus is the central character of this chapter) go fishing. The parallels in this scene to Jesus’ initial call to many of his disciples, as well as other notable ministry evenings, is staggering – the disciples fishing, them not catching anything, Jesus calling out to them, a huge catch of fish, and sharing a meal that Jesus prepared with fish and bread. Many make much of the numbers used in this section – seven disciples, 153 fish, and the third appearance of Jesus to the disciples. Any “deep” meaning to these numbers is simply going down a theological rabbit trail. What these numbers do emphasize is the historicity of the events recorded. The more details provided, the more difficult it is to dismiss the historical fact. It is details like this that “prove” the reliability of not only this Gospel account, but Christianity as a whole (this point would be paramount throughout the 1st and 2nd Century specifically, as many would try to crush the growing movement of Christianity by belittling it as myth).

The next scene (v. 15-17) shows an intense interaction between Jesus and Peter. One thing that’s important to note that Jesus’ confrontation (and reconciliation) with Peter was not done in private. As Peter’s denial was very much a public pronouncement and occurrence (John 13:38 and John 18:15-18, 25-27), so Peter’s reconciliation with Jesus was made public (in front of the other six disciples who were there). Peter’s three denials are met with three pronouncements of love back to Jesus, and Jesus answering by stating three commissions to ministry. One could say that due to this interaction between Jesus and Peter, that Peter was indeed the first Pastor of the church (ordained by Jesus himself by Jesus call to “feed” and “tend” His sheep (the church) – the very job description of a New Testament pastor).

The final scene (v. 18-25) is quite a sobering one. First, Jesus predicts Peter’s death by crucifixion (the phrase “stretch out your hands” was a euphemism of crucifixion in the 1st Century). Peter, perhaps feeling (understandably) quite unsettled, sees John following him and Jesus, eavesdropping on their conversation, and wants Jesus to predict John’s death as well. Jesus rebukes Peter (something Peter should be very used to by now) and basically tells him that the only thing that he should focus on is his call to follow Him and not let the lives or fates of others distract or deter him from that mission. Interestingly, this is something that Peter
failed in yet again when he allowed the perceptions of others get him off mission, prompting the Apostle Paul to confront him (Galatians 2:11-14).

The main theme of Chapter 21 is that following Jesus does indeed require much faith, much work, much love, much focus, and much perseverance. Jesus graciously invites not just Peter and the disciples, but also you and me to join Him in the making of more disciples, the building of the church, and the transformation of the world.

Grace and peace to you on your mission.

**Key Text to Memorize**

John 21:25 “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

**Theology to know**

*Love.* When Jesus posed the first two “do you love me” questions to Peter, John recorded those words with the Greek word “agape”, meaning a deep, selfless, sacrificial love. Peter’s first two responses (as penned by John) were with the Greek word “phileo”, which communicates a brotherly or friendship type of love. Jesus is then shown by John changing his third question to Peter using the “phileo” word for love. Most modern commentators say that interchanging the two words holds little consequence. Peter is simply grieved by the amount of times that Jesus asked him if he truly loved him. Jesus is communicating to Peter that love and humility is what Peter would need to follow Jesus and pastor the church.

**Questions to think about and discuss**

1. One can’t ignore the friendship and hospitality highlighted here (v. 12, “come and have breakfast”). Do you value the practice of hospitality and sharing a meal with friends? What does this practically look like for you?

2. Jesus was releasing Peter from a massive amount of guilt he must have been feeling in verses 15-17. Is there guilt from choices that you’ve made that you’re still holding onto? What does Jesus use to release Peter from his guilt (hint: it’s in the questions Jesus asks Peter)? How do you need to receive this?

3. What distracts you from being focused on following Jesus? Who do you compare yourself to? How can you better remain focused?
**Living on Mission**

The disciples were doing the hard work of casting their nets, but their efforts weren’t fruitful until they followed Jesus direction. Where are you casting your net of evangelism? Is it being fruitful? Is it where Jesus wants you to be casting?

**Prayer Emphasis**

Thank Jesus for the truth of his life, death, resurrection, and teachings in the Gospel of John. Ask him to fill you with love for Him and the faith to fully follow.
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