

Small Group Guide – Week 40

The Gospel of John

The Church at Brook Hills

October 4-10, 2010

John 1

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. He writes his gospel to both Jews and Gentiles living in the last years of the first century. He is commonly found explaining Jewish customs and geography and he translates Aramaic words (the language Jesus spoke) into Greek, all so that his Gentile readers will understand. We also see John speak with a Jewish audience in mind as he clearly demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah and that He fulfills Old Testament themes and prophecies. Overall, John makes his intent for writing the Gospel clear in 20:30-31:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 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."

His main means of showing his readers this truth is by the way he organizes his Gospel. The Gospel of John is basically organized around seven miracles of Jesus (2:1-11, 4:46-54, 5:1-15, 6:5-13, 6:16-21, 9:1-7, 11:1-44) and seven "I am" statements of Jesus (6:48, 8:12, 10:9, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1). There are innumerable truths about Christ that we can find just by exploring these passages in depth. But perhaps the most powerful of John's arguments for Jesus as the Son of God comes in John 1. The gospel of John is distinctly set apart from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Throughout his gospel, John gives us excellent insight into the purpose of his writing by stepping aside in the text and explaining the spiritual reality of the facts he has laid before us. The beginning of the gospel of John is no exception to this and includes some of the most known and cherished verses in all of Scripture. Here, John shows the eternal existence and intent of Jesus, in hopes that the reader will believe in Him, that they may have life in His name.

Study the Text . . . (Read Genesis 1:1 then John 1:1-3)

Notice the similarities in these verses. John begins his story of the life and message of Jesus by echoing the very first moment in history. He speaks of the "Word", someone who has been in existence from the beginning, and even more, someone who has always existed. John Piper said this:

"Think on the mere eternal existence of Christ...Sheer existence is, perhaps, the greatest mystery of all. Ponder the absoluteness of reality. There had to be something that never came into being. Back, back, back we peer into the endless ages, yet there never was nothing. Someone has the honor of being there first and always. He never became or developed. He simply was."

Group Discussion . . .

- Think on and discuss the eternal existence of Christ. The One who became flesh and dwelt among us has existed eternally with the Father and the Spirit. He always was and always will be. Is this something you have ever thought through or pondered?
- Compare John 1:3 with Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:1-4. Notice the incredible power of Christ. All things were created through Him and for Him. Everything that has been made is upheld and sustained by Him. Nothing was made without Him. Often we think most of Christ's work on earth, and indeed that was the crowning glory of His work. But take a few moments and consider the work of Christ before He came. Comprehending the vastness of His power before He came makes His coming all the more glorious.
- Now continue by comparing your thoughts of Him to Philippians 2:5-11. Christ humbled Himself by letting go of His heavenly position and being born in the likeness of men. See how understanding His eternal power brings greater light to the humility of His coming? How does this change the way you understand humility and Paul's command in Philippians 2?

Study the Text... (Read Genesis 1:3-5 then John 1:4-6, 14)

John explains that this "Word" was, in fact, God Himself, and that life is in Him. This life is the light of men. Notice the similarities between the two passages. John continues to point back to Genesis to show the contrast between light and darkness. Furthermore, we find that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Therein lies the foundation of the gospel, God came to us as a man, Jesus.

Group Discussion...

- Compare John 1:4-5 to Romans 1:21 and then 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. See the importance of these verses. John is saying that there is life to be found in Jesus. This lines up with what Jesus says in John 8:12. The god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they will not see the Gospel of Jesus. But John 1 says that the darkness has not overcome the light. Feel the weight of the spiritual battle this presents to us. Do you remember when the light of the gospel freed you from the god of this world? How are you proclaiming the gospel so that the minds of unbelievers might be freed from the darkness?

Study the Text . . . (Read John 1:9-13)

These verses tie together what John has been building to: The God who has always existed has come into the world, the very world He created. He came to His people, and yet His people did not receive Him. And yet that is not the end of the story. John speaks of those who did receive Him, those who “believed in His name.” He explains the reason that Jesus came, the most glorious truth in all of history, that to those who believe in the name of this God, in the name of Jesus, He gives the right to become children of God. These truths are what drive us in light of what we just saw about unbelievers. We must speak the Gospel that many might become children of God. The bottom line of the chapter is this: the eternal God, Jesus Christ, became flesh and came into the world to bring us grace and truth.

Group Discussion...

- What does it mean that His people did not receive Him? Can you think of any examples of God’s people rejecting Him that we have read over the past year? How are these examples similar to experiences in your own life?
- Discuss what you think it means to “believe in His name.” Read Matthew 7:21-23. Does this effect what you think?
- Read Titus 2:11-14. Notice the similar language about the grace of God “appearing” to us in the person of Jesus. Is this passage true of you? Are you waiting and hoping for the return of Jesus? What do you think Jesus will say to you “on that day?”
- Is your life characterized by light or by darkness? What would a life characterized by light look like? How about one characterized by darkness?
- Who is someone that you know whose life reflects the fact that they truly believe what John 1:1-5 says about Jesus? What is it about them that stands out most to you?
- Do you believe that Jesus is God? Why is this such an important question?