

The Year of Discipleship in 3-D

(Further Developing Devoted Followers of Christ)



Welcome! Growing into more fully-devoted followers of Christ, may this time help all: **Grow Upward** into a more mature personal relationship and commitment to Christ Jesus faithful to God's Word!

Grow Outward to neighbor and world around, learning how to love well and to lead in what matters to God - guided by God's Word, by Jesus Himself, and by the Holy Spirit!

And, **Grow Inward** to discover a more contemplative faith, enhanced by both silence and prayer!

The Scripture for Sunday, December 19, 2021

[STUDY LESSON 15]

THE GOOD NEWS READING:

John 1:1-18

{1} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was in the beginning with God. {3} All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being {4} in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. {5} The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

{6} There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. {8} He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. {9} The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

{10} He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. {11} He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. {12} But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, {13} who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

{14} And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. {15} (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") {16} From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. {17} The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. {18} No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

DISCUSSION GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS:

For an overview of John consider watching: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/john/>

1. Open (*or have someone in the group open*) with a prayer inviting the work of the Holy Spirit to open up the hearts and lives of any and all to shape believers into more fully devoted following of Christ.
2. Read (*or have one or more persons read*) the passage printed above (*or from a bible*).
3. In this opening passage, were you do choose a verse to memorize because of its resonance and importance for you, what very would that be? What draws you toward it?
4. What words or phrases caught your attention as your heard this passage read? Put another way, were you to choose to memorize a very and cherish it from this text, what verse might that be and why? Take note within yourself, what sort of feelings arise in that word, phrase, or verse.

5. BACKGROUND NOTES: The author of the fourth Gospel, writes with a distinctive tone and approach as compared to the synoptic writers of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Outside of a number of aspects of the passion accounts, there is minimal overlap with the other accounts, save the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Of the many unique elements of the Gospel According to John are the factor of the seven miraculous signs, the self-descriptive usage by Jesus of “ego eimi” or “I am,” the chronology of three years of Jesus’ ministry, an aura of mysticism, how it is Jesus is in control at all times, the tension with the Jews and the centrality of the temple, and the anonymous one described as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Essential parts could be broken down as:
 - a. Prologue: 1:1-18
 - b. The Public Ministry of Jesus: 1:19-4:54
 - c. The Object of Persecution and unbelief: 5:1-12:50
 - d. Ministry to the Disciples - Upper Room: 13:1-17:26
 - e. Jesus Death and Resurrection: 18:1-20:31
 - f. Epilogue: 21:1-25

6. As many scholars have proposed, the Prologue presents eight major themes which are then revisited and unpacked throughout the Gospel. Based on these first 18 verses, what might they be? (Allow the “pump to be primed” with the following):
 - a. Jesus as the creative activity of God - “In the beginning” (verse 1)
 - b. The origin of Jesus and His relationship with God - (verse 1)
 - c. The primary role of the Word made flesh is to reveal God - (verse 1, 14)
 - d. Others...

7. What sort of implications might there be for the intimate linkage of Jesus as the Word, particularly in how it is that what follows (in the gospel) is an abundance of words telling the story of Jesus? With this, note John 20:30-31 - “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

8. Interestingly, perhaps, in this prologue the word “grace” appears no less than four times (*1:14, 16, 17*). Given that this powerful word (theologically and otherwise) does not appear again throughout the Gospel according to John, how might this be interpreted by the reader?

9. With the printed page in hand, our preference tends to encounter a text as it is read. Historically and among the ancients, it was most often received orally, evoking a response and engagement with the story. What is it that you “hear” from this opening passage from John?

10. Most know, of course, that disciples will begin to be called and present themselves throughout this Gospel. They will journey with Jesus for much of His three years of mission and ministry. With only 18 verses in hand, in what ways can this text inform or shape discipleship at this initial stage?

11. Following (or discipleship) involves some degree of knowledge and theological understanding as to who Jesus is. Can you identify Jesus in any way such that it can translate into further defining what it means to be a disciple of Christ?

12. Can you identify any particular ways your Christian faith and following might be inspired to change in light of this passage from John (and any discussion and/or reflection that may have taken place)?

13. (*Optional*) Read the passage once more. Then, take some time to close (or have someone close) with a prayer.