

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 26, 2021

[STUDY LESSON 16]

THE GOOD NEWS READING:

John 1:19-34

{19} This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" {20} He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." {21} And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." {22} Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" {23} He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

{24} Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. {25} They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" {26} John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, {27} the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." {28} This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

{29} The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' {31} I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." {32} And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. {33} I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' {34} And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

DISCUSSION GUIDANCE AND QUESTIONS:

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

For an overview of John 1-12 consider watching: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/john-1-12/>

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. What words or phrases caught your attention as you heard this passage read? Put another way, were you to choose to memorize a verse 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?

4. BACKGROUND NOTES: This text serves as essentially the transition from the prologue into the public ministry of Jesus coupled with the expansion of the “testimony of John.” Other gospels (synoptics) identify him as “the Baptist,” but not here in the fourth Gospel. Here he is John the Witness. Some material is overlap, but, of no surprise, John the gospel-writer offers additional perspective to this one “crying out in the wilderness.” The actual account of Jesus’ baptism is not formally on record in John. The closest we have is John’s testimony (*John 1:32*).
5. Given the eight apparent themes identified in the prologue of John (*John 1:1-18*), which of those do you sense are being expounded upon here from these fifteen verses?
 - a. The connection of Jesus to the creative activity of God
 - b. The origin of Jesus being connected to His relationship with God and His identity
 - c. The primary role of the Word made flesh being to reveal God, even the very heart of who God is
 - d. How God revealed in Jesus is at the same time holding the human and divine together
 - e. The contract between darkness and light, synonymous with belief and unbelief
 - f. The theme of witness arising out of a relationship with Jesus and what is discipleship
 - g. How it is that a person, through Jesus, is in relationship with God - this is described/experienced
 - h. The theme of abundance of God
6. Consider the provocative and probing inquiry put to John by the religious elites sent from Jerusalem. How might you answer, “Who are you?” John answered initially in who he was not, prior to who he was. Might you tend to respond similarly?
7. The “I AM” sayings of Jesus will appear later, but here we get the negative response of John, “I AM not.” How are John and Jesus’ identities being revealed here as they are juxtaposed against one another?
8. Imagine Jesus walking towards you as John did. (*John 1:29*) John, as witness, declares, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” What are some of the possibilities of your witness? How do you live “pointing to Jesus?”
9. What is some of the potential connective tissue with Jesus as the “lamb of God,” His eventual death, in John’s accounting, on day of preparation for the Passover (when the lamb is slaughtered), and that of the exodus from Egypt, where the children were spared when the blood of the lamb was painted on the doorposts and lintels of their home?
10. The word “sin” first appears here. (*John 1:29*) Sin is not so much a moral category as a synonym for not being in relationship with God. How does that inform your faith?
11. Following (or discipleship) obviously implies the fundamental aspects of relationship and witness.
12. Spend some time talking or reflecting upon witness as an aspect of discipleship. If willing, share (*or personally identify within yourself*) an aspect of your life where your witness/pointing others to Jesus took place...and perhaps when it was less than evidence.
13. What is your main discipleship “takeaway” from this text?
14. Can you identify any particular ways your Christian faith and following might be inspired to change in light of this passage from the Bible (and any discussion and/or reflection that may have taken place)?
15. (*Optional*) Read the passage once more. Then, take some time to close (or have someone close) with a prayer.