



A five week Bible Study

The following study is an accompaniment resource for our current “John: the Eye Witness” sermon series. While it does not follow the weekly preaching texts, we believe that studying it in your Gospel Community will get you deeper into the text, will help you to better understand major themes in the book of John, and will give you a picture of Jesus that is both beautiful and robust.

Its primary focus is on the Life (eternal life) that Jesus offers to all who would believe. It will help you to identify what the original first century readers would have looked to for fulfilling and abundant life, and it will help you to see the places, people, and things (besides Jesus) that you may be looking to for life.

We suggest beginning each session with prayer, inviting God the Holy Spirit to lead you and to speak to you through his Word. Then you may want to read the key text out loud, read or summarize the introductory paragraph(s), and then go through the discussion portion. Feel free to add or subtract questions as the Lord leads. The “win” is not as much to follow the guide to a “T”, but to create time and space for God to speak to you as a community. Praying together at the end is also a good practice, asking, “what is it God wants you to take away and live out from the study this week?”

The leader may want to have a pen handy to write out responses to keep record so that the next weeks’ session can begin with accountability and praise.

It is our prayer that in making this resource available that your groups will be drawn more and more to Jesus as the giver and source of life.

It has been written and graciously made available to us by Mike Evanson

Week 1

Eternal Life: The Quest for Life More Abundant

Key Point: Eternal Life is the type of life Jesus provides in the present

Key Text: John 17:3

Introduction

What is the purpose of life? What makes life worth living? How do we live the best life possible? What is life really all about? These are questions that people have been asking for thousands of years. The answers are many and probably familiar to us all: happiness, love, family, helping others, pleasure, money, friendships.

*It is probably safe to say that just about all people are searching for sources of life; things that make life not only possible, but better, richer and more worth living. In this short Bible Study series we will spend some time looking at the Gospel of John. In this gospel, John wants to challenge his readers with the question: **Where can life be found?** His answer is on one level quite simple: Jesus. For John, Jesus really is superior to all the other things that people look to for life. For the rest of this study we are going to look at how John shows Jesus as the ultimate and best source of life; better than all the rest in fact. To begin though, let's begin with this word 'life.' What does John mean when he uses it?*

Discussion

1. If you asked the average person on the street what was needed to have an amazing, fulfilling, best-life ever, how would they answer? How would you answer? What does a perfect life look like?
2. What insights do the following verses give us into what John means by 'life' or 'eternal life'? If it helps think of the five 'W's' of life (Who? What? Where? When? Why?). Pay special attention to the 'when' of eternal life.
 - a. Jn. 5:24-30
 - b. Jn. 17:3
 - c. Jn. 10:10
 - d. Jn. 1:3-4
3. What stood out to you from your answers to #2? Did anything surprise you?
4. How does John's understanding of life/eternal life speak to humanities' common search for a fulfilling, amazing, best-life-ever, life?
 - a. What do you think John would say to the answers you brainstormed in #1 to the question: What is needed to have the best possible life?
5. If you are Christian, would you describe your life with Christ so far as an amazing, fulfilling, best-life-ever, life? Why or why not? What needs to change?
 - a. If you are not a Christian, how do you feel about your life? What do you think about John's suggestion that ultimate life is found in Jesus?

Clearly for John, life is found in Jesus. Perhaps most surprising for many readers is that in John's thinking, 'eternal life' is a present experience. Make no mistake, Jesus offers life after death (5:28). What John wants us to see however, is that 'eternal life is not only about length of life, but about quality of life; He came "that they might have life, and have it more abundant."(10:10)

For the rest of the studies we are going to look at some sources of life and see how John wants to show us that Jesus is superior to all of them.

***“Eternal life is not
only about length of
life, but about
quality of life”***

Week 2

Jesus and the Place of Worship: The Search for the Transcendent

Key Point: Jesus is the true Temple

Key Texts: John 2:13-25, 4:7-24

Introduction

One important source of meaning and life throughout human history has been religion. For people all over the world, worshipping the divine and experiencing its presence brings meaning and enrichment to life. Near the beginning of John's gospel he writes, "And the word became flesh and dwelled among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of the father's only son, full of grace and truth."

In this study we are going to look at what John's wants to say about worship and experiencing the presence of God.

Discussion

1. What do the following verses teach about the presence of God? How would you characterize the biblical author's attitude towards the presence of God?
 - a. Ex. 33:12-16
 - b. Deut. 4:37-38
 - c. 1 Kgs. 8:10, 27
 - d. Ps. 16:11; 21:6; 98:7-9
2. What do the following verses teach us about the function and importance of the temple/tabernacle? ('the tabernacle' or 'tent of meeting' was a tent, a precursor to the temple, that functioned in very much the same way)
 - a. Ex. 33:7; 40:34-38
 - b. 1 Kgs. 8:31-36
 - c. 2 Chron. 7:1-3
3. How would you characterize Jesus' attitude towards the temple in 2.13-25? What is the significance of him referring to himself as a temple? (think about your answers from #1 and #2)
4. Read John 4:7-24. What is the nature of the conflict the Samaritan women brings up in 4:19-20?
 - a. How does Jesus respond? What do you think Jesus means by "in Spirit and in Truth?"
5. Think again about your answer to #1 (the biblical attitude towards the presence of God). For John, all that the presence of God means and does can be found in Jesus.

- a. How do you experience the presence of God? How can you seek God's presence through Jesus this week?
6. Worship is often a source of conflict for churches, such as it was for the Samaritan women who Jesus speaks to in John 4.
- a. How would John want to speak to such conflicts? (Consider John 14:15 in your conversation).
 - b. What elements of worship are you unwilling to compromise on?
 - c. Is there anything we should never compromise on in worship? If so what?

The life that God's presence and worshipping Him brings can only properly be done in relation to Jesus. For John, the temple was not a bad thing at all: it was the place where God's people could come to worship and experience God's presence. All of this is still important for life. What changes is that now all of this is done in relationship with Jesus.

Jesus is the presence of God

Week 3

Jesus and Community: The Search for Intimacy and Belonging

Key Point: Jesus provides the key to Christian Fellowship

Key Text: John 17:20-26

Introduction

For many people, it's relationship with others that brings life. Just think: How many people, when asked, would answer that family is the most important thing in life? It is such human groupings (family, social clubs, ethnicities, nations) that provide so much structure and fulfillment to our lives. They can however also be messy and end up taking away life as much as giving life. Whatever the merit of these other relationships, John is keenly interested in the believer's relationship with one another. Jesus has much to say about these relationships in the Gospel of John and so it is to these that we shall next turn our attention. How does Jesus shape our relationships with each other as believers? How do such relationships contribute to life?

Discussion

1. How do you understand the relationship between Jesus and God? Brainstorm as a group.
 - a. How would you describe the bond between Jesus and God? Get as many different descriptions down as you can. Get down as many illustrations, metaphors, analogies that help you understand this relationship.
 - b. Now read the following passages in John. Add any insights they provide to your list above.
 - i. 5:36
 - ii. 6:38-39
 - iii. 8:27-30
 - iv. 10:32-38
 - v. 12:27-28, 49-50
 - vi. 14:8-14, 31
2. Read John 17:20-26. Jesus prays that believers will be one "just as you are in me and I am in you" (17:20-21). Thinking of your answers from question #1, what does this say about what believer's relationships with each other should be like?
3. What does Jesus pray the result of this oneness will be in v.21?
 - a. What does this say about what Christian fellowship should look like? (Consider also 13:1-17)
4. Do some brainstorming. What can your Gospel Community, church, or other group of believers you might be a part of, do to make these kind of relationships a reality? (Try to think of answers beyond

simply “pray more.” Try to think of very tangible actions: activities, changes to format etc.) What difference could such transformed relationships make in your church, community, and workplace?

5. All the ideas in the world will not make a difference if they remain written on a piece of paper and not acted on. Write down the activity below that you or your group is committed to taking. Be specific. Set a timeline. Find someone who will hold you accountable. Pray, follow through and see what God will do!

Commitment Agreement

I, _____ commit to doing the

following: _____

trusting that God will use it to further strengthen our group.

***“I in them and you in me, that
they may become perfectly one,
so that the world may know
that you sent me and loved
them even as you loved me.”***

Week 4

Jesus and Earthly Leaders: The Search for Inspiration

Key Point: Jesus is the Leader who provides

Key Text: John 6:1-51

Introduction

People live in a complicated relationship with their leaders. We can all think of a leader, whether political, business, religious etc, who has inspired people. People look to their leaders for so many of the things that make for quality of life: inspiration, protection, guidance. However, a person does not live long before they find themselves being disappointed by a leader. Too often, leaders become self-serving and fail to live up to all the expectations that people put on them.

In John 10:11 Jesus says "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." In this study we will look at Jesus as the Great Leader of his people.

Discussion

1. Who are some leaders that people revere/respect and why do they revere them? What do people expect of leaders? What makes them choose between leaders? What makes them get rid of old leaders?
2. Leading up to chapter 6, John has been setting up a comparison between Moses and Jesus. Note two instances in particular:
 - a. Jn. 1:17-18
 - b. Jn. 3:13-15 (see also Num. 21:1-9)
3. Read 6:1-51. Spend some time reading and make sure you get a good feel for the flow of the narrative. (If reading in a group, break the text up and have each person read a section).
 - a. Why is it ironic that the people ask for a sign in 6:30-31? (Hint: Read 6:1-13 again)
4. What is the thematic link between 6:1-14 and 6:15-51? (I.e. what is the idea/image/metaphor that keeps coming up?)
 - a. In 6:35 Jesus will use the first of the 7 "I am" statements in the Gospel of John. What is the meaning of it?
5. Read the following sections on Moses. Then read the sections in parentheses from John. What kind of relationship/comparison is being made between Jesus and Moses? How does John show that Jesus is superior to Moses?
 - a. Ex. 16:1-21 (John 6:1-14, 32-35, 47-51)
 - b. Ex. 33:12-23 (John 6:46)

6. In what areas of your life are you tempted to follow human leadership and not Jesus' leadership?
 - a. Read the following sections and ask yourself "Am I really following Jesus' leadership in these matters?"
 - i. Matt. 5:21-22
 - ii. Matt. 5:38-48
7. An important issue in this section is provision. Jesus makes it clear that he provides eternal life; human spiritual leaders like Moses do not.
 - a. In what ways have we as Christians created unhealthy dependencies on human leaders? (Pastors, worship leaders, Christian writers)

While John does not dismiss the ways in which human leaders are an important part of life lived well, he will not allow his readers any confusion on this point: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. No other leader provides life the way Jesus does. The question for Christ-followers is: Will we follow the leadership of our Shepherd?

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Week 5

Jesus Triumphs over Death: The Search for Life Everlasting

Key Point: Jesus provides life in the face of death

Key Text: John 11:1-43

Introduction

In this series so far we have looked at a number of factors that contribute to quality of life (worship, leadership, Christian fellowship etc.). As important as all of these are, the reality of physical death hangs over all of our lives. The best life ever still comes to an end eventually. Eternal life, of the kind which John wants his readers to have (20:31) is life lived well; both with the reality of death in the present, and with confidence of life beyond death in the future.

Discussion

1. Start by reading John 11:1-43. What is the reason that Jesus gives for not going right away to Lazarus?
2. What does Jesus mean in vv.9-10? (Considering the context of v.8 and 9:4-6 might give you a clue. When is 'day' and 'night' according to 9:4-6?)
3. Reread the conversations between Martha and Jesus (vv.20-27), and Mary and Jesus (vv.28-32). Now read a familiar story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42).
 - a. Does anything stand out as different to you about the character of Martha?
4. Read vv.21-27 again. What does Jesus have to correct in Martha's theology? How does Jesus' assertion speak to Martha's situation as a sister grieving her brother's death?
5. Note how the following verses in John develop the idea of God's sovereignty (i.e. God's will and plan being carried out regardless of human action or interference).
 - a. Jn. 2:3-4
 - b. 7:1-9
 - c. 8:20
6. In spite of Jesus' sovereignty as God, what moves him in 11:33-36? What is the significance of this?
7. The resurrection of Lazarus is the last of Jesus' miraculous public signs in John. Do you think there is a reason why John records this one last? If so what is the significance?
 - a. What does 11:45-48 tell you about the connection between witnessing the miraculous and belief in Jesus?

8. Jesus seems to embrace sadness and weeping in this passage. What is the significance of Jesus' weeping?
 - a. What does this say about His attitude toward sadness and those who are downtrodden?
 - b. What does this mean for us, as individuals? As the church? Do we have the same attitude?

9. In 11:9-10 Jesus urges his disciples to take advantage of every opportunity to do good in spite of opposition. This teaching is all the more poignant because Jesus will triumph over the ultimate enemy, (death) in this chapter. Spend some time in quiet thought/prayer.
 - a. Think about the past week, what are some opportunities to live as Christ lived that you missed? As a group share, and commit and pray that you will not live in the guilt of missed opportunities but will seek to be open to the ones that come this week.

We began this study series by looking at the nature of Eternal Life. In the first study we discovered that while this does mean life after death, John is especially concerned to show us that the kind of life which Jesus provides concerns the present. This is precisely the truth that Martha needed to learn in this story. When Martha expresses her confidence that Lazarus would rise again, she betrays her belief about Eternal Life: it is a future blessing. Jesus does not dispute this part of Eternal Life, but His response makes the matter a present reality, "I am the resurrection and the life." Jesus, right now in our present lives, is Life, in every circumstance. This is the great hope which John has been pointing his readers to throughout his gospel. Jesus is the source of life, who brings life in every facet of life. Jesus calls all to come to him and have life (5:40).

***"I am the
resurrection and the
life."***