

“Breakthrough!” in 2022

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 07.02.2022

HE > I – JOHN 3:17-36

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

Today, we’re going to spend some more time looking at the ministry of John the Baptist, but before we do that, we have a little more work to do in the last section which we weren’t quite able to finish up last week. If John 3:16 is the most well-known and beloved verse in all the Bible, then John 3:17 might be the most neglected and overlooked verse. The word ‘for’ ties this thought back to the previous one. So, what was John just talking about? He was talking about God’s love for the world. Verse 17 is a continuation of that theme. It’s important because it gets at the heart of why Jesus came to this world. There are several verses scattered throughout the New Testament that help shed light on why Jesus came. Luke 19:10 tells us that He came ‘to seek and save the lost.’ John 6:38 tells us that He came ‘to do the will of the Father.’ Matthew 20:28 tells us that ‘He didn’t come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Here we learn even more about Jesus’ purpose in coming to this earth. ‘He didn’t come to condemn the world but to save it.’ That was His mission. We see this mission play out in the way Jesus chose to handle the situation with the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. The Jewish law stated that she should be put to death. Everyone else stood with stones in their hands, ready to pronounce judgement upon her. But not Jesus. He said, ‘Let the one without sin cast the first stone.’ Slowly, but surely, the crowds thinned until the only ones left were Jesus and the woman. At that point, Jesus took her head into his hands and looked into her eyes and said, ‘Woman, where are your accusers?’ She said, ‘Nowhere.’ Then Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.’ {John 8:11} Let’s get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most or spoke to you from Pastor Daniel’s message this last weekend?
2. Have you ever coached a little league team or parented a little league player? What is the coach’s job when he or she is helping children learn the game? Does the coach of a little league team get a trophy at the end of the year?
3. Do you know who was responsible for the “Just Do It” campaign? Do you know whose slogan that was? (Nike). Do you know who came up with the “Got Milk?” campaign?
4. What do these comparisons have to do with your relationship with God?

The coach’s job in a children’s sports league is to help the children learn the game, to enjoy it, and to help them improve. If he wanted to make a name for himself, it wouldn’t be as a little league coach. The reason a children’s coach doesn’t receive a trophy is because the season isn’t about the coach; it’s about the kids. The same goes for advertising companies. You probably don’t know who came up with the “Just Do It” campaign because the point was to promote Nike, not the company. We don’t know who came up with the “Got Milk?” campaign because they wanted to get people to drink milk. It wasn’t their jobs to advertise themselves. This was what John the Baptist did. His duty was to be “a voice of one crying out in the wilderness” and to “prepare the way for the Lord” (Matt. 3:3). John was not trying to exalt himself, he was exalting Christ. This is our duty as well as John the Baptist’s. Our lives are not supposed to be about promoting ourselves; we are to live for the glory and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:17-21

1. If Jesus is the “only Son” of God, why does Romans 8:14 say, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”?
2. How do you think Nicodemus felt as he left Jesus that night? What happened to Nicodemus hereafter?

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3. Did Jesus come to “condemn the world” (John 3:17)?
4. How do those who don’t believe in Jesus end up?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:22-25

1. Why was John the Baptist baptizing people? Why were Jesus and His disciples baptizing also?
2. Why was John thrown into prison?

John the Baptist was baptizing people for repentance. He was making the path clear for the coming of the Messiah. The people then, like now, had lives cluttered with selfishness, with sin, and with pride. John told them to repent of it. He warned them that “Even now the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees! Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt. 3:10). John was removing stumbling blocks of self-righteousness. He was clearing out their hearts of self-justification. He was preparing them for the salvation that comes by casting oneself on the mercy of Christ.

3. What do you suppose the argument about purification was all about?
4. How are we purified before God today, and why is it necessary that this happen?

Most likely, the quarrel about purification arose over how one is to be purified of uncleanness and sin. The religious leaders taught that one had to keep the law, and even laws about the law in order to be pure and undefiled before God. But John taught a different way to be clean: repent and look for the Messiah. The law could not and cannot make one clean before God. It only brings guilt. The only hope is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

READ JOHN 3:26-31

1. Why do you think John’s disciples told him about the crowds that Jesus was drawing?
2. How was John able to avoid jealousy and pride at Jesus’ growing popularity at the expense of his own?

John’s disciples might have been jealous on John’s behalf. They saw that Jesus and His disciples kept growing in popularity, and even some of those who used to follow John were now going over to follow Jesus. When others prosper it is easy to grow jealous of their success. John avoided this prideful trap by remembering who he was, who he wasn’t, and that it is God who gives gifts to all. First, John remembered that he was the messenger sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. Why would he be jealous or upset when the Messiah’s ministry began to thrive? Second, he remembered that he wasn’t the Messiah. He was sent to point others to the Messiah. Why would he be upset now that people were following the Messiah? Instead of being jealous or upset, John was filled with joy because people were listening to Jesus and going to Him to be baptized.

3. What does John’s example teach you about your responsibility as a follower of Christ today?
4. What are some of the temptations that make becoming less for Jesus to become more particularly hard for you to do?

Our duty as Christians is not to build our own little kingdoms and reputations. We are to point to Christ just as John the Baptist did. We want people to grow in their faith, and we should be happy when they do so even if we are not as popular as we think we ought to be.

5. How did Jesus come “from above”? Why would the truth that Jesus came from heaven give John great relief?
6. How does this truth change our lives and our witness today?

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Before the world was made, before God spoke and made light, before anything at all was created, God the Son existed. God the Son existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is eternal. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to teach us truth and to show us the path of righteousness. We are helpless sinners who can only hope to live by the grace of the Eternal God. This is why John the Baptist was relieved to see Jesus’ ministry growing. Jesus is the eternal Son of God. In humility, he realized that everyone would be better off going to Jesus instead of himself. It is tempting for us as self-centered creatures to think we know better than God. We second guess His Word. **We think we will be happier disobeying His commands. We think we will find more joy living for our glory instead of His. But the reality is that we are all infinitely better off repenting and trusting in Christ.** We will find more joy seeking His glory than our own. What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

John said, ‘A person can only receive what is given to them from heaven.’ Whatever you have in terms of gifts, talents, abilities, or resources, it’s all from God. You may think that you pulled yourself up by your own bootstraps and built your business from the ground up all on your own, but who gave you your personality and drive? Who put the right people in front of you at the right time? Ultimately, every good thing in your life is a gift from God. John understood this.

1. Are there any areas of your life where you might be at odds with God? Pray that God will help you repent of them this week so you might live better for the kingdom. If you are unaware of any, pray that God might reveal things you do not know about.
2. How might you decrease to self this week and allow Christ to increase in you? Are there any ministries you might help or contribute to in order to put this into practice?
3. How can you apply these truths that God has spoken to you heart this week? Who can you share this story with this week?

PRAYER - Close in a time of group prayer. Ask the Lord to help us all have the humility to decrease and work to see Christ increase. Pray that the Lord will help us see who we are and be content with what God has given us. Close by asking the Lord God to help us exalt Jesus above all other things.

“What after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow.” {1st Corinthians 3:5-7}