



Unit .20

Session .03

John Points to Jesus

Scripture



John 1:29-34; 3:25-36

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one I told you about: ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ **31** I didn’t know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel.” **32** And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. **33** I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ **34** I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” ... **25** Then a dispute arose between John’s disciples and a Jew about purification. **26** So they came to John and told him, “Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is going to him.” **27** John responded, “No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him

from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah, but I’ve been sent ahead of him.’ **29** He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom’s friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom’s voice. So this joy of mine is complete. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease.” **31** The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. **33** The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true. **34** For the one whom God sent speaks God’s words, since he gives the Spirit without measure. **35** The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands. **36** The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

How does the Old Testament sacrificial system help us understand the penalty of sin and the necessity of Jesus' death?

How would you describe to someone the power of sin versus the presence of sin?



99 Essential Doctrines

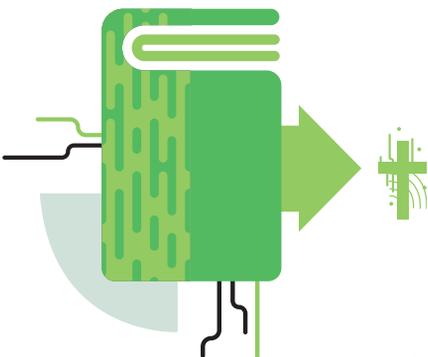
Christ as Sacrifice

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins.

Main Point

Significance is finding joy in Christ's significance, not our own.

How does recognizing who Jesus is bring clarity to your own identity and purpose?



Christ Connection

John the Baptist said he wasn't the groom; he was the friend of the groom. As the friend, it was his responsibility to decrease in stature and take joy in the groom's wedding. Jesus is the groom from above who came to give His life for His bride—those who receive His Word and believe in Him.

When have you found yourself to be most delighted in making more of Christ and less of yourself?

In a culture that thinks all religions are equally valid, how do you feel about the gospel's clear distinction between those who are in Christ and those who are not?



Head

If you were explaining Christianity to someone, would you focus on what Christians do and don't do? Explain.

Why is it important to understand and explain the reasons behind why Christians should live a certain way?



Heart

How does the idea that decreasing leads to an increase in joy apply to us today?

What are some areas where you could decrease to make more of Jesus in your own life? Why will this increase your joy?



Hands

How should our lives today be similar to John's life?

What are some ways you can intentionally point others to Jesus this week?

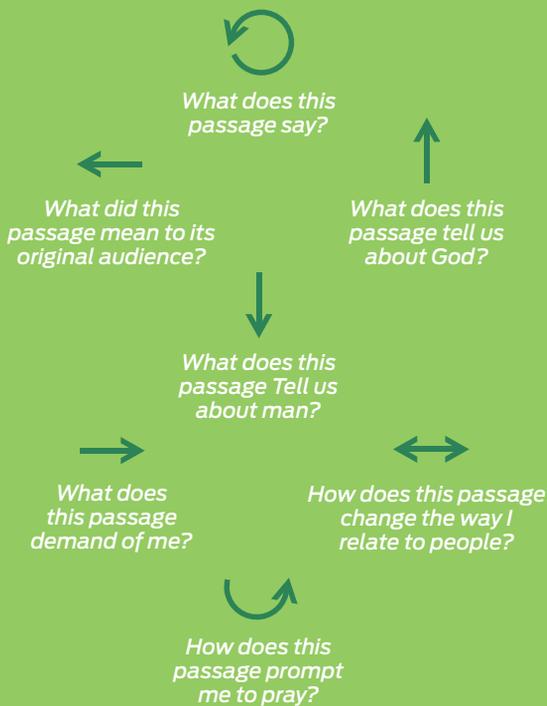
Daily Devotions



Day 1

John 1:19-28

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



God revealed His righteousness through His Son, Jesus Christ, which means we get to receive the incredible gift of eternal life apart from the works that we do, apart from our own righteousness. We get life through faith in Christ. Because Jesus was the Lamb of God and took away the sins of the world, we are now justified freely because of the grace of God (Rom. 3:21-24). I know there can be times in our Christian walk when we feel like these simple components of the gospel are just the “basics” and we need more than that to grow. But I’d like to challenge you to recognize that you never graduate or move on to better things than the gospel. The gospel is the bigger and better thing. And the truths of what Christ did for us on the cross—removing both the penalty and the power of sin as well as giving us His righteousness—are truths that have powerful implications for every area of our lives. So look to Him and point to Him—always.

In what ways do you feel you’ve taken the gospel for granted? What does it look like to change that?

John 1:29-34

Do you remember the story of the ten plagues of Egypt? The final plague was the death of every firstborn son. The only way to protect against this plague striking your home was for a lamb to be sacrificed and its blood used as a marker over the door of your home, just as God had instructed (Ex. 12:1-13). The blood of the lamb was an indicator that a home would be passed over and spared. After their exodus out of Egypt, the Israelites celebrated the Passover each year as a way to remember and celebrate God's protection and provision. Yet the sacrifice of a lamb, and all Old Testament sacrifices, meant that God only "passed over" sins previously committed. The sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of the perfect Lamb of God who would one day come to take away the sins of the world for all who believe.

What does it mean and why does it matter that God was able to both demonstrate His own righteousness while also declaring those righteous who have faith in Christ?

John 1:35-42

John the Baptist said that being with the groom made his joy complete—even though that meant John would decrease in popularity, prominence, and authority. Can we say the same thing? Does being with Jesus bring us so much joy that we would consider it an honor to decrease? That we would consider decreasing being part of the completeness of our joy? If we're being honest, I think this is often not true of us. But why? What stands in the way of this for us? Only God can show you what it is for your heart. Maybe it's not knowing Jesus enough.

When we have shallow ideas of who Jesus is, our joy stays shallow, too. But the more we know the riches and depths of His infinite love and kindness, the more depth we add to our joy. Maybe we think too highly of earthly things because we don't realize how temporal and fleeting they are in light of eternity. Or maybe it's a little bit of both. The answer to this problem can only be found in Jesus and revealed to us through the kindness of His Holy Spirit.

In what ways do you struggle most to find complete joy in being with Jesus—even when that means decreasing in some way? How can you cultivate a deeper love for Jesus today?

John 3:22-30

This passage makes a clear statement to the exclusivity of the gospel. Jesus is the only way to life and rejecting Him leads to death. In our relativistic culture, we like to make categories for every person to have something unique for themselves. And while God has made us all different and our diversity is a beautiful reflection of Himself—this is one area that isn't ambiguous. We either have life or we don't. Think about how ridiculous it would sound if a relative of yours had major surgery and the doctors came out to give you an update. You've been worried, so you ask, "Did she make it out alive?" And the doctor says, "Well. Sort of. She's sort of dead." That would be absurd. You can't be "sort of" dead. You are either dead or alive. And the same is true for our spiritual lives. We are either dead in sin or we are alive in Christ. And the only way to life is through the Son.

What implications does the exclusivity of Christ (that Jesus is the only way) have on the way you understand the gospel? What implications does it have on how you live your faith?

John 3:31-36

The way we walk with Christ is the same way we came to know Him—through the gospel. Jesus saved us from the penalty of sin so there is now no condemnation for the believer. Jesus saved us from the power of sin and gives us the Spirit to enable us to walk as He did. Take some time to reflect on when you first came to know the Lord. And if you haven't come to know Him yet, take some time to reflect on these verses. For many of us, the joy and peace we experienced when we first came to know Christ is not characteristic of the way we live our lives. If we're honest, we probably can't always say that we are like John the Baptist, a friend who delights to rejoice in the groom. But I want to encourage you to read this passage again and again and allow your heart to rejoice in Christ as you read the truths of this text. Pray that God would give you a new joy in the gospel that would compel you to point others toward Him with new passion and excitement.

What part of these verses most excites you? How could you share that with someone this week?