

aaStudy Guide for the Central Church of Christ 2-18-18

February 18 we will study John 1:4-13. Discussion questions are:

1. If a dead person is someone who does not respond to stimuli, how does that translate to people who are spiritually dead?
  - a. Have you ever felt since becoming a Christian that you were still spiritually dead?
  - b. Why is it important to notice God doing new things in your life?
    - i. What is a recent new thing you have personally noticed God doing in your life?
    - ii. If you haven't noticed God doing anything new in your life does that mean He isn't doing anything new or you aren't paying attention?
2. At what point in one's worship should he become concerned that he might be spiritually dead?
3. What is the connection between emotions and spiritual life?
4. How do you understand the promise in vs. 12-13?
  - a. What evidence is there that you have received the fulfillment of that promise?
5. What is the difference in turning over a new leaf and being born again?
6. What are the 2 great privileges that accompany becoming a child of God? (intimate access to God and inheritance.)
  - a. How do you understand those terms?
7. How do you understand the expression, "*the father has swallowed up the judge?*"
8. How do you understand Romans 8:19 as it relates to being a member of God's family?
9. Why would the following be symptoms of lack of spiritual life:
  - a. Being overly concerned about the approval of others.
  - b. Wanting to be noticed by others.
  - c. Concern over whether or not you measure up to other people.
10. What do you think it was that enabled early Christians to sing as they walked into the arena to face lions?

Sermon: "*Waitin' for the Light to Shine*"

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube++%22waitin+for+the+light+to+shine>

I have lived in the darkness for so long  
I'm waitin' for the light to shine  
Far beyond horizons I have seen  
Beyond the things I've sensed  
Beyond the dreams I've dreamed  
Are the things I've done  
In fact each and every one  
Are the way that I was taught to run  
I am waitin' for the light to shine  
I am waitin' for the light to shine  
I have lived in the darkness for so long  
I'm waitin' for the light to shine

Does that sound like you? Have you lived in the darkness too long? Are you waiting for the light to shine? If you will take to heart what John is telling you about Jesus light will burst forth into the darkest corners of your life and where there is light, there is life.

The reason we are studying John is because John answers better than anyone else the question, “Who is Jesus?” I remind you that is the most important question ever asked and the answer to it will completely determine how you live. If Jesus was not God then indeed there are no standards. There is no right and wrong. Just do whatever you want to do for today you live and tomorrow you die. On the other hand if Jesus was who he claimed to be, very God, then the only proper response is to throw everything else away and follow him.

We learned a lot about Jesus last week but today John has a new insight for us. He says, “In him was life.” As John explains how Jesus presents new life he does it through 4 very simple teachings:

1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.
2. In Jesus we receive new life through the new birth.
3. Through the new birth we have family rights and are brought into the family of God.
4. The key to new life is believing in His name.

Here’s what John is saying. First of all, *“All human beings are dead.”* In verses 9-11 we are told that Jesus’ life is like light but when his light shined on human beings we rejected it. We just couldn’t comprehend what we were seeing. The mark of someone who is dead is a dead body has no sensitivity to stimuli. You can shine the brightest light directly into their eyes and they won’t blink. So the Bible tells us we are spiritually dead. When a person does not respond to stimuli from God, that person is spiritually dead. A spiritually dead person might be the most vocal sports fan in the stands. He might be moved to tears at an art show. He might love great music with a passion unequaled by others. But when you expose that person to the great truths of the Bible, the sinfulness of human beings or the death of Christ, a spiritually dead person may find that disgusting or uninteresting. He might even say, “I believe it.” but there is no sight. Life does not appear brighter because of what he believes. A spiritually dead person can sit in an auditorium like this, consider himself a member in good standing, and when a great truth of God is presented passionately and people sing it with all their hearts or amen it with loud voice, he looks around and wonders, “What are they getting all worked up about?” A spiritually dead person in a worship service is something like a non-sports fan at a football game when everyone stands and cheers as the running back streaks down the field toward a touchdown and the non-sports fan looks at the scoreboard clock to see how much longer he has to sit there and endure this. When you come alive spiritually you begin to see these great truths in a new way. You begin to say, “I’m interested in this.” You begin to find yourself actually having emotions connected to your belief system. You begin to feel things you never felt before. You’re alive spiritually! You wonder, “How could I have missed this all these years?” The answer is, “Because you were dead.” Dead people don’t hear. They don’t see. They don’t feel. Dead people don’t notice things. Dead people don’t know they are dead.

Perhaps someone of you is thinking, “Why are you speaking in such extreme language? Why don’t you say, ‘Human beings are sick? Human beings are hurting.’” Because the Bible does not

say we are hurting in our sins or we are disabled in our sins. It says we are dead in our sins and we need to be made alive together with Christ.

There are levels of life. There is vegetable, animal, and human life. When you compare the higher form to the lower form it hardly looks like life at all. Compared to a dog, an ear of corn does not look alive. Compared to a human being, a dog does not appear to have life. When Christianity enters the picture it says there is a level of living for human beings that is far different from ordinary human life. Spiritual life is life lived on a higher level. Spiritual life is as much higher than ordinary human life as ordinary human life is higher than the life of a dog. The change from the natural life to the spiritual life is about as big a change as for a puppet to become a real boy like Pinocchio.

So the first teaching is we all are dead and therefore we need a new life. The second teaching is that new life comes in the form of the new birth. Verses 12 and 13 clearly teach about this. *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.”* We are talking about the implantation of God's own Spirit within your soul.

When people discover they can't manage their own life they usually decide, “I need to turn over a new leaf. I need to get religious.” and that doesn't work. You've been trying your entire life to live up to a set of standards and you have failed, and your plan is to go get you a whole new set of standards and try to live up to them? How is that going to be any different? The Bible says you don't need to turn over a new leaf; you need a whole new root. Jesus didn't come to make you better. He came to make you new. He isn't trying to teach the frog to jump higher. He is trying to give the frog wings so it can fly higher than it ever imagined jumping. Jesus didn't come merely to improve your morals and your ethics. He came make a dead person alive.

The new life – do you have it? Do you notice God doing new things in your life? Have you found yourself saying, “I never knew that before? I never saw that before?” That is the language of people who have been born again.

The third teaching is the new birth gives us family rights. *“...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God....”* – *John 1:12* As God's child you have rights because you are adopted into the family. There are 2 specific rights given to us. The first is intimate access to the Father.

Here is a hanging judge. He is tough as nails and strikes fear into the heart of every criminal. Everyone is intimidated by him, but not his little son. Because at home on the living room carpet they wrestle and the judge is willing to be a horsy for the boy to ride. The little boy knows his father is a judge but the father has swallowed up the judge. People who are spiritually alive know God as Father rather than judge.

The other family right is you are an heir. Listen to the Bible's description of the day you receive your inheritance, *“Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.”* – *Romans 8:19* What a day that's going to be. The day you get your

inheritance which includes among other things, a new body, and all of creation applauds the wonders of your glorious inheritance. That is one standing ovation I can't wait to receive!

I know there are people who don't have the new life and they need it desperately. If some of you are in that condition I hope you are motivated to ask questions about how you can find this new life. But what of those of you who have the new life. Are you living in it? Why are you so up and down? Why are you so concerned about who approves or disapproves of you? Why do you care who notices you or doesn't notice you? Why are you worried about measuring up to other people?

How did those early Christians manage to sing as they walked into arenas to face lions? They did it by living in anticipation of the life which is to come. If you think life is to be done in the 80 years you have on this planet so you better see everything you can and have all the fun you can because the end is coming, you aren't living the new life. What did Paul say? "...what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later."

Where do you start? Listen again to Jesus' best friend, "...to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...." – John 1:12 When my grandson, Boady, was 4-years-old he taught me a great spiritual truth. He said to me, "Papa I know a secret about God." I said, "Oh, what is it?" He said, "You gotta believe in Him." I asked, "Why do you have to believe in God?" He answered, "It's the only way to sock it to the devil." That's is so simple it is profound. And what John is saying is also so simple it is profound. The question is, do you believe in his name? It's the only way to sock it to the devil.