

Living the Story

A Study through Scripture

Introduction:

Today we are looking at a passage that is, perhaps, well known, but still a critical part of understanding how to live out the story. The lesson today will be much more focused on the application of the text, using the Adult Bible Class time and the sermon to help build the base for your group discussion.

Summary of the Text:

John's prologue should remind us of the beginning of the book of Genesis. In the Hebrew Bible, Genesis was titled "In the beginning" after the first words of that text. Here, you cannot begin to read this without going back to the original words of scripture. When you do, however, you have the added element of "the Word."

Who or what is the Word? Be careful how you initially answer this because if you were to have read these verses without any other exposure to Jesus, it would not be until the 14th verse that we have any indication the identity of the Word, and not until the 17th that Jesus is even named. Obviously from our knowledge of the book of John, we know the author is talking about Jesus, but I think he intentionally does not come right out and say "Jesus was in the beginning," in order to point out the importance and almost transcendent nature of Jesus. This is not just a man we are talking about—we must first understand him as being with God from the beginning and in fact, himself being God.

John brings in several terms that will be key themes in his book, but that also support the importance of looking back to Genesis. "Life" will be used often (See John 20.31, where John defines his purpose as being able to help people believe and have "life" in his name. John 3.16 also comes to mind.) John 1.5 contains the words light and darkness, which are themes of John, but are found in the creation story of Genesis.

Why John (the Baptizer) appears in the middle of the prologue that is so focused on Jesus is unclear. Perhaps it is to help remind people it is Jesus, not John, who is the Son of God. (There may have been some in John the Author's day who held John the Baptizer in such high esteem they denied or diminished the relevance of Jesus in comparison.) John is merely a witness, giving testimony (the repetition is intended here), to and of Jesus.

We begin to see some of the issue at stake in verse 9. Jesus, the true light, is coming into the world, but those who should most recognize him did not. This is the painful irony. Those whom the Word created should have received him, but only some of them did. Now, to those who did, they had the right to become children of God. John's point, while affirming those who followed Jesus, is still to point out that many who should have did not recognize him.

So, the word became flesh. The Greek in verse 14 carries the idea of building a residence. I think if we were to translate the Greek of this verse into today's language, we might best do so by saying: Jesus built a house in our neighborhood, or on our block. John then describes the glory of Jesus, much in the same way the glory of God dwelled among the people of Israel in the Tabernacle.

The implications of this moment are huge! Jesus, who was God (verse 18 says that we know God because Jesus makes him known), becomes one of us. It is not enough for God to just sit up in heaven and work out his good, but he actually comes down so we can see his glory on a firsthand basis.

LESSON #23

Date: 2/25/2013

Text: John 1.1-18

The Story: Chapter 22

The Big Picture: The Word built a house in our neighborhood. Have you seen it? Have you built your own house for Jesus in your neighborhood?

Materials Needed: none

Needless to say, this brings up a very important question. How well are we seeing Jesus? And if we believe we are to be Jesus to the world today, how well are we building houses among the people who need to know him?

Preparing for the Group Time:

We have all seen the WWJD bracelets. I wonder if a HWJB bracelet might work better? How Would Jesus Be? We often think of actions we are supposed to do in order to determine the will of God (If I just can figure out what Jesus would do, I will be doing what I am supposed to). All of that seems somewhat temporal to me. I do it, and then I go about my business until another big thing happens and I need a little Jesus instruction again.

I think it is harder to answer the question how well we are being Jesus to others. I think the call we have is to try and be Jesus all the time where we are located. Some choose specific locations to move in order to be Jesus to that place. Foreign mission fields might be an example of this, but intentionally moving into an economically depressed neighborhood would be as well. Some choose jobs in places they know have less Jesus followers. All of these are examples of trying to be incarnational to people, that is, live out the life of Jesus as best you can in your flesh.

As you prepare for this lesson, evaluate how well you are being Jesus to those around you.

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Lesson #23
Text: John 1.1-18

Lesson Outline:

Ask you group to describe the best neighbor they have ever had. Why was this person/family your “best” neighbor? What did they do? What did they not do?

You may also, depending on group size and the time you have, want to ask your group the same questions above for your worst neighbor.

Read John 1.1-18.

Ask Discussion questions.

Close with a time of prayer, asking God to help you be Jesus as you go about your days this week.

Discussion Questions:

How important is it for our faith for us to know that Jesus was with God and was God?

Why would people who were created by the Word reject the Word?

John points out that the Word became flesh and “built a house on our block.” How have you seen Jesus in the lives of people around you?

If Jesus were building a house in a neighborhood today, where do you think he would build it?

Scripture tells us that we are to be witnesses for Jesus—we become Jesus to those around us—and show people what it means to follow God. How do you “build a Jesus house” in the places you are every week?

How can you do a better job of this? How can this group help encourage one another to do a better job?

For the Children:

I think our children understand what it means to live for Jesus and to be Jesus to the people around them. I would spend some time asking them ways they have been able to be Jesus for the people around them. I think you will be surprised by their answers!

Living the Story:

This is one of those weeks where the “Living the Story” section sort of writes itself. Go be Jesus. That’s it.

Next Week:

Next week we continue to look at the life of Jesus (*The Story* chapter 23).