

Sermon Audio Input

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Message Outline

Rightly Approaching the Gospel of John

Moving Beyond Reading What You Already Expect to Discovering What Is Actually There

- I. Hurdling Indifference in order to Run a Race Worth Winning
- II. What We Need to Know in order to Begin to Understand the Gospel of John
 - A. About the New Testament Gospels & Their Writers
 - B. About the Gospel Promised in the Old Testament
 - C. About John and His Gospel in Particular
- III. The Way Forward

Please See

Pastor Kit Culver's sermon and study notes for his message John 001, "Initial Considerations," from 7/5/15.

Examine the Scriptures (Be Berean!)

- Gen 1, 3:15, 12:1-3
- 2 Sam 7 (esp. vv.12-16)
- Isaiah 49 (esp. v. 6), 53
- Mark 1 (esp. v.15)
- John 1 (esp. vv. 1-18); 20:30-31
- Rev 21 (esp. vv.1-7)

Consider & Discuss (Be Transformed!)

Community Group Discussion: What are some practical things you must do in order to 1) approach the Gospel of John so as to first get over the hurdle of disinterest in Bible study and then 2) understand what John meant by what he wrote and finally 3) let that meaning sink in and transform you in the hands of the Spirit as God intends the Scriptures to function?

Memory & Meditation Verse

"but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31

Community Life

- **Looking Ahead: Goal for Fall 2015:** That we (each and together) would be the members of the body of Christ God intends, being "transformed by the renewing of our minds", ministering and being ministered to as He has gifted.
Means: While actively and thoughtfully listening to what God has given us in the Gospel of John, I encourage everyone to either participate in one or more of the Community Groups available at SHC, or come up with your own God honoring "Body Life Plan."

Next Sunday

What we need to hold in mind if we are to rightly **INTERPRET** the Gospel of John.

Rightly Approaching the Gospel of John

Moving Beyond Reading What You Already Expect to Discovering What Is Actually There

Introduction

This morning we begin our new series on the Gospel of John. We are traveling this road following the lead of Pastor Kit Culver from Sovereign Grace Community Church in Denver Colorado. Pastor Kit began his study through the Gospel of John back in July and has already presented 10 messages in that series. I have asked Pastor Kit if we could join them in their study because I have in the past benefitted so much from his teaching ministry.

He has walked the road of careful thoughtful humble examination of the Scriptures seeking to allow them to speak for themselves. He has displayed an unusually high view of Scripture and an unusual willingness to go where they lead being on the lookout for his own presuppositions and those of others along with the other influences which might prejudice one's reading of them. Further Pastor Kit also distinguishes himself amongst the men I know in his significant grasp on the Scriptures in their proper context. He knows his Bible; and not just a few verses but most verses and those in their close and in their canonical context. He is one smart guy with a great head on his shoulders and the ability to retain what he learns and hold in his mind connections that seem to come and go in my own. Add to this a man who is no stranger to hardship and loss. He has weathered many faith-trying storms including the loss of two of his adult children. His loss makes his understanding of life deep indeed. With Kit we have seasoned sober wisdom.

On top of all this Pastor Kit is willing to spend his valuable time speaking with me (and others from our church who get in touch with him) about the Scriptures and about pastoral ministry. We have a standing Wednesday phone meeting and he has taken the time to come minister to the saints of Stone Harbor (as he calls us) several times along with his wife Denise.

I speak of Kit because for our time in the Gospel of John I will be seeking to complement his ministry and openly referring you to his fine study notes and messages along the way. I seek to complement the content of his ministry, not duplicate it. I will be seeking to bring to you an explanation of the Scriptures made more clear by my own careful consideration of them interacting myself with Pastor Kit's notes and messages. I will not bring you a recap of what he said, I will bring you what I understand before the Lord is most important for us as a local church to know referring you to his notes and messages for further study.

I will say more about the mechanics of how we will be using both his resources and our own in house resources at the end of this message. But I did want to let you know right off the bat that I am standing on Pastor Kit's shoulders so that I can hopefully reach you and serve you with the message of the Gospel of John.

I do not want you to think that what we are about to begin is going to be some extended study session in which we gather a whole bunch of information about the Gospel of John. I do want you to know that my highest objective in all this is to know our Lord Jesus Christ as fully as God has revealed Him in the Scriptures leaning on His Spirit to lead us and guide us into all truth and His people to encourage each other to love and good deeds. Our goal is knowing Him and being transformed by Him. I will have failed if we do not come to know our Lord Jesus more fully. I will have failed if we gather more information about him but have not been transformed into His image.

May we, with God's help be so transformed during the course of our careful consideration of the Gospel of John that the result is an observably closer relationship with Jesus, an actual transformation unto Christlikeness, and a living out of our lives in community with the body such that we are built up and God is glorified. That is my heart and my goals. I trust you share them.

Let's begin by getting over a hurdle I perceive. Picture a track racer. He or she steps up to the starting blocks and hears the starter call out, "Ready, Set, Go!". Well before that racer steps up to the starting line on "Ready" much necessary preparation has already taken place. There is the conditioning, the skill development, putting on the right shoes and clothes, eating right, resting up, warming up, showing up on time...

If the "race" for us is interacting with the Gospel of John in such a way that God's purposes for us in the book are realized, then we have some hurdles to get over before we even begin. The hurdle that I feel compelled to speak about this morning is "indifference" -- indifference to the Gospel of John. We all know such a book in the Bible exists, but we all fight a greater or lesser indifference to it. If we are to approach the Gospel of John rightly we will have to give ourselves to...

I. **Hurdling Indifference in order to Run a Race Worth Winning**

A. **Paul uses the race and runner analogy when speaking of our Christian lives:**

1 Cor 9:23ff -- I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. **24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.** 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

1. **"Run in such a way that you may win" Paul tells the Christians in Corinth.**
2. We need to hear this same exhortation in regards to our Christian lives and particularly our approach to the Scripture.
3. We live in a time and culture with a conscience that say it is "OK" not to expend much energy in Christian activities like Bible Study. But brothers and sisters in Christ, there is something insidious in the voice that tells us to sit this race out, just let others run, you can watch them from time to time, you don't have to get all hot and sweaty yourself. This is not the voice of Paul in regards to the Scriptures. No, he says, "run in such a way that you may win" and I believe he would say this in regards to your approach to the Scripture in particular not only in regards to your Christian lives in general.
4. The best I can describe the Christian race as I see it is that it is a hurdles race; and the **first hurdle is indifference**. We have to clear that hurdle if we are to even begin our race. Are you indifferent to the Scriptures? Can you take them or leave them? If I have time I will read them a little, but more days than not you "don't have the time."
5. The Scriptures are inspired by God. He gave them to us so that we would know Him and His will. If we are to know Him as He desires we must run the race of listening carefully to Him in all the Scriptures.
6. **Indifference to God's word robs us of intimacy with God Himself.**

B. **The Writer of Hebrew similarly says ([Heb 12:1-3](#))...**

“...let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...”

1. It doesn't have to be pretty, but will you clear the first hurdle of indifference and admit to yourself the importance of listening carefully to the voice of God in the Gospel of John; and then join me in studying it?
2. The prize is the knowledge of God and the edification of His people; it is intimacy with God and His people; witness of God in concert with His people.
3. Is your day currently spent so well that you don't have a decent segment to spend listening to God in the pages of Scripture? I think most of us before God can manage our responsibilities and still find time to listen to Him.
4. The Bible is different than other things we give our time to like TV, recreation, news shows, other books, movies... it is different, it is better. God uses it to transform us into Christlikeness. He doesn't do that with TV, news, movies, other books.

The Bible is different, it is better! So don't be indifferent to it. Get over that hurdle. Please! For your good. For the good of the body. For the glory of God!

II. What We Need to Know in order to Begin to Understand the Gospel of John

A. About the New Testament Gospels & Their Writers

1. The Gospel of John is one of 4 Gospels in Our New Testaments

a) All 4 are biographies of Jesus testifying of the good news that God has brought about His promises in Jesus of Nazareth

(1) They are Bios not Autobios -- Jesus did not write an account of Himself he “entrusted his biography... to His disciples.”¹

(a) Jesus entrusted his biography to His disciples then and now. What application might this have in our lives? [God works through human vessels. We are Jesus' disciples today with whom He has entrusted His biography for the good of those in our time. If we are to be trustworthy we must share this biography with the people God has placed us amongst.] Will we prove trustworthy?

(2) But not bios like you may have read from other authors. These authors were guided/inspired by the Holy Spirit in their lives and writings.

(a) **Focused Proof of Holy Spirit Role in Apostles Lives including their writing of the Gospel's: [John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15; Acts 1:8](#)**²

(b) **See also [2 Tim 3:16-17](#) on the Spirits inspirational role in all the Scriptures**

b) All 4 are written with heavy reliance on first hand eyewitness accounts of Jesus, proclaiming that He is the Christ/Messiah promised in all the Scriptures

(1) Matthew has been attributed to the Apostle Matthew since the 2nd Century

¹ Culver, The Gospel According to John Study Notes, p.1

² Broader Context from Kit: [John 14:16-26; 15:18-16:15; Luke 24:44-53 with Acts 1:1-8](#)

- (2) **Mark** has been attributed to Apostle Peter's disciple John Mark since the 2nd Century and thus is regarded as Peter's account of Jesus
 - (3) **Luke** has been attributed to Paul's "disciple and ministry companion"³ Luke carefully examined all the accounts of Jesus and wrote his gospel "in consecutive order" so that his intended recipient, Theophilus, would "know the exact truth" (Lk 3:1-4).
 - (4) **John** has been attributed to the Apostle John since the 2nd century as well.
 - (5) **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each** have their own purposes for writing which varied within the larger purpose of bearing written testimony to Jesus as the Christ.
- c) **The Other 3 (Synoptics = "seeing together"⁴) Have Many Similarities**
- (1) **By in large, they are more chronologically organized** than John (though each Gospel writer has had his own agenda other than just recording the events they recall about Jesus). They are overlapping accounts of Jesus. John's is much more thematically organized and contains much not recorded in others; while not mentioning other things that are covered in the synoptics.
- d) **The Gospel of John, Has a Different View, It Tells the Story of Jesus from a Different Perspective**
- (1) **That difference is complementary not contradictory**
 - (a) Like how I hope my messages and Kits will be. Kit know his church and is first speaking to them and I know you and am first speaking to you, but we are both speaking of John's Gospel account concerning Jesus.
 - (b) Beginning in John 13, John records the words of Jesus when He was gathered with His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem at Passover when He instituted the Lord's Supper. They Synoptic Gospels also record this time, but John does so in 5 chapters while the Synoptics cover the same event in less than one chapter. See the [Blue Letter Bible](#) online for a handy harmony of the Gospels. John chapters 14, 15, 16, and 17 are all unique to John.

B. About the Gospel Promised in the Old Testament

1. The Gospel Was Promised in the OT

2. A Broad Sketch of that Gospel

a) **God: I will restore fallen creation remaking a new creation**

(1) **Gen 1 -- God creates** everything that is and orders it as a kingdom over which He is King and humanity is His vice regent with delegated responsibility to rule over the Kingdom of God (KOG) as image bearing sons of God living in intimate communion with Him and representing Him in the rest of the created order.

(2) **Adam and Eve give in to the temptation of the Serpent and "Fall"** declining to observe the order God had established and failing to guard and protect the garden and rule over the rest of creation, they allow themselves to be ruled over by Satan thus turning all things upside down shattering the intimate communion

³ Culver, *ibid.*, p.2

⁴ Culver, *ibid.*, p.3

they had enjoyed and replacing it with estrangement from God which is death compared to the life God had given which was characterized by God's presence with His created people.

- (3) **Gen 3:15 -- "Proto-Evangelium" -- The first telling of the Gospel.** In the midst of pronouncing the curse on the serpent for his role in the Fall, God promises that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent -- an early foretelling of Jesus dealing a fatal blow to Satan by his work on the cross thereby taking back the kingdom of God from the usurping serpent.
- (4) **Gen 12:3 -- Abrahamic Covenant -- God will bless all families of the earth through Abraham**
- (5) **God Reaffirms His Promise with Abraham's Son Isaac (Gen 26:1-5)**
- (6) **God Reaffirms His Promise with Isaac's Son Jacob (Gen 28:1-14 esp. v.14)**
- (7) **God Renames Jacob Israel (Gen 32:28)**
- (8) **God Calls Israel His Son (Ex 4:22)**
- (9) **God Delivers Israel from Bondage** in Egypt and brings them to the land He had promised them; but they fail to trust Him and spend 40 years wandering in the wilderness
- (10) **A tabernacle of God's design is built** that God might be present with His people and God fills the tabernacle with His glory (Ex 40:34-35).
- (11) **God brings them into the land He had promised and eventually establishes a Kingdom in which David, a man after God's own heart, is King** (2 Sam 2)
- (12) **God promises Israelite King David that a man from His family would reign on the throne of the Kingdom forever** and David knows that God is speaking about the distant future (2 Sam 7, esp. vv 11-19)
- (13) **A Temple is built** as a more permanent place for God to be with His people and God's glory resided there (2 Chron 7: 1-3)
- (14) **Israel fails to be Israel again**, the kingdom is divided, the northern kingdom goes into exile in Assyria, the southern kingdom follows going into exile in Babylon, and the temple (the God prescribed meeting place of God with man) is destroyed
- (15) **God promises Isaiah the Prophet future Restoration in A Very Different Order Implying a whole New Creation**
 - (a) **11:6-10 -- "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb..."**
 - (b) **49** -- This new creation restoration of things into the order of God's intention was to come about by way of a singular Servant who would be Israel. **Verse 3 reads: "You are My Servant, Israel, In whom I will show My glory."** Remember God regards Israel as His son. This coming Servant would be an Israelite who would not fail as the nation of Israel had done over and over again. It was this True Israel who was the Messiah that God promised and in whom all the blessings God had promised to Israel and through Israel to the world would be realized.

- (16) **God rescues Judah from Babylon, returns them to the Promised land and has the Temple rebuilt. But the temple is never inhabited by the God,** His shekinah glory never descends at it had on the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the First Temple. The people are back in the land and temple is rebuilt but the promises of God remain unfulfilled. The people of Israel are still in subjection at the time of Jesus they are in subjection to the current super-power, Rome. A Son of David is not on the throne.
- (17) **When will God restore the Kingdom to David? When will He send His promised Servant-Son, the true Israel to set all things right and finally establish His Kingdom.** This was the time John, the Jew, the fisherman lived in. This was the angst he carried -- longing for the long promised Messiah to come deliver them from bondage and establish the KOG.
- (18) This makes all the more significant the word's with which the Gospel writers begin their Gospels
- (a) Mark begins his Gospel -- Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"** (Mk 1:14b-15).
 - (b) Mathew
 - (i) Matthew identifies Jesus as God's Son. -- "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." (Mat 2:13-15).
 - (ii) After Jesus' Baptism God Endorses and Identifies Jesus -- "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Mt 3:17).
 - (c) John
 - (i) 1:1 -- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - (ii) 1:14 -- And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- (19) If we are to hear John and receive his message we will come to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31

C. About John and His Gospel in Particular

1. John

- a) John was a Jew, an Israelite
- b) John was not John the Baptist
- c) John was not John Mark, Peter's disciple who wrote the Gospel of Mark
- d) John the Gospel writer, although there is no small amount of discussion, I understand to be also the author of 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation
- e) John was the Apostle of Jesus whom we read about in Mat 4:21 the fisherman (partners with Peter (Lk 5:10)), brother to James and son to Zebedee, together John and his brother we given the name Boanerges (boa-ner-gees), "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17).
- f) John is included in the list of Jesus' 12 Apostles in Mat 10:2; Lk 6:13-15
- g) John along with Peter and James were with Jesus when he brought back to life Jairus' the synagogue official's daughter (Mk 5:37, Lk 8:51).

- h) John was with Peter and James when they accompanied Jesus to the mount of transfiguration (See Mat 17; Mk 9:2) and saw Jesus in a physical manifestation of His actual glory; and He was talking with Elijah and Moses; and God said, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mk 9:7)
- i) John and His brother were also the bold two who asked of Jesus, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory." And who then had to be set down by Jesus saying in Mk 10:40, "But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."
- (1) Jesus continued in v.42, "Calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. **43** But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; **44** and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.""
- j) John was the one who asked about other people not in their immediate circle using Jesus name
- (1) **38** John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." **39** But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. **40** For he who is not against us is for us. **41** For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.
- (2) Parallel in Lk 9:49
- k) John and James were the ones who (when the Samaritans would not offer Jesus and His disciples hospitality as they traveled to Jerusalem) asked Jesus, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"
- (1) And they were the ones who had to suffer Jesus subsequent rebuke that later manuscripts record as, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; **56** for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk 5:51-56).
- l) John was with Peter, James and Andrew when Jesus spoke with them privately about things to come including the destruction of the temple, false Christs who would arise, the persecutions they themselves would have to endure, His own second coming and their need to "Be alert" (Mk 13)
- m) John was sent by Jesus along with Peter to prepare the Passover which would be the Last Supper and the time Jesus would make so clear He was God's final provision for the deliverance of humanity from their bondage to sin. He Himself was God's ultimate Passover Lamb. Lk 22:8.
- n) These (above) are mentions of John from the Synoptics. The Gospel of John is full of the experiences which John himself witnessed and are too many to recount in this introduction. But perhaps a few references will add to our understanding of John who wrote the Gospel.

- (1) The first betrays John's understanding of how Jesus saw him. John referred to himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" who at the Last Supper was "reclining on Jesus' bosom" (Jn 13:23); See also Jn 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20.
- (2) The second betrays Jesus confidence in John. John was with Jesus at His crucifixion along with Jesus' mother Mary. Jn 19 records the dying Jesus entrusting the care of his mother into the hands of His beloved disciple John:
 - (a) **26** When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He *said to His mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**" **27** Then He *said to the disciple, "**Behold, your mother!**" From that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*.
- (3) Finally we need to know that John was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ when He appeared to His disciples at the Sea of Galilee and told them to cast the net of the other side from where they had been fishing and the caught so many fish that their nets were breaking. John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter flung himself into the water to swim to Jesus, John rowed in with the fish and the other disciples. See John 21.
- (4) With these scriptures we being to build an understanding of John that will help us understand what he has written of Jesus.

2. John's Gospel

a) Purpose

- (1) John 19:35 -- And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, **so that you also may believe.**
- (2) "but these have been written **so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.**" John 20:31
- (3) John's purpose overlaps the purpose Jesus stated for saying what He said and doing what He did.

(a) Joy

- (i) John 15:11 -- **These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.**
- (ii) John 17:13 -- **But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.**

(b) Peace

- (i) John 16:33 -- **"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."**

(c) Life (Overlap)

- (i) John 10:10 -- **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**

(d) Belief (Overlap)

- (i) John 11:42 -- I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me.”
 - (ii) John 14:29 -- Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.
 - (iii) John 13:19 -- From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*.
 - (iv) John 17:21 -- that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.
- (4) If we hear the words of Jesus and John in the Gospel of John and take them to heart we should see in ourselves no small increase in: joy, peace, life and faith. We spoke earlier about getting over the hurdle of disinterest in studying John. May this further incentivize you.

b) Themes

- (1) **The Pre-Incarnate Christ** via prologue concerning “the Word”
- (2) **The Love of God the Father and God the Son**
- (3) **Serving John’s greater purpose that his readers would come to know and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God promised in the Scriptures.** Pastor Kit says, “...John structured his presentation to substantiate his claims concerning Jesus. And at the heart of those claims is his contention that Jesus is the incarnate God -- the God, not just of Israel, but of the whole world. He is Yahweh become flesh: Yahweh returned to His people in order to end Israel’s exile and so fulfill His restorative purposes for the world through Israel (cf. 1:1-18; 3:13-17; 12:31-32).”⁵

III. The Way Forward

- A. The Spirit
- B. The Bible
- C. Pastor Johnny’s Resources (Some)
 - 1. Recorded messages
 - 2. Sermon and Study Notes
 - 3. My Availability to Talk, Text, Email, Meet
- D. Pastor Kit’s Resources (More)
 - 1. Messages
 - 2. Notes
 - 3. My Phone Conversations
 - 4. Your Phone Conversations
 - 5. His Visits
- E. Together Johnny and Kit Give You “Some More” on the Gospel of John
- F. Congregational Resources
 - 1. Sunday Attendance & Note Taking (TC)
 - 2. Active Participation in the Sunday Conversation
 - a) Your insights shared with the body during service and after
 - 3. Community Group’s -- we are resources for each other (Eph 4)

⁵ *ibid.*, p.4