

Life Groups in Central Telford Parish

Summer Term 2015 "Words of Life – The Letters of John"

Week beginning 19th April 2015

1 John 1:1-4 "The Word of Life"

• The Aim of this Session

There is sometimes the need to stop and look at something from a different angle in order to try and make sense of it. It can be a relationship, it can be a work situation or a problem at home ... whatever it is, taking a fresh look helps to unpack it and increase our understanding. Probably writing towards the end of his life (some 50 or so years after Jesus' death and resurrection) John is not just wanting to make sure that people know about Jesus' life (which he did from first-hand experience in his Gospel) but also to teach them about what Jesus' life actually means when applied into our lives. Which is what he does in his letters ...

• Welcome

Where is your favourite view? Why is it so special for you?

• Worship

If it helps you to worship, light a candle in the middle of your group and be quiet for a while. Read John 1:1-14, slowly and deliberately (you may like to delay lighting the candle until verse 4!). After a moment of quiet, the leader might like to say these simple sentences:

- ❖ Jesus was there and a part of the Creation of the Universe and the World in which we live.
- ❖ Jesus came to bring light in to a dark world.
- ❖ Jesus offered life but many did not want it.
- ❖ Jesus offered the opportunity for us to know God in the intimacy of a parent/child relationship.
- ❖ In and through Jesus, we can know God as Creator, Redeemer, Light and Friend.

Speak out prayers and worship in response and ask Jesus to stand among you in your time together.

• Word

Read 1 John 1:1-2. Sounds familiar ... ???! John is writing at the end of his life, aware that he is one of the last surviving people to have actually known Jesus personally.

- Thinking back to the series last term in Luke's Gospel and the things you have learnt about Jesus over the years, how would you describe Jesus to someone who had never heard of Jesus before?
- If you had just two or three minutes to describe him, what would be the key points?
- And what would be the words you would use to describe his character?

John repeatedly uses some key images throughout his writing, especially talking about the contrasts between "life" and "death" and "light" and "darkness". Notice that in these verses, he only actually names Jesus in verse 3 – the rest of the time he is trying to find the words to describe the vastness and the awesome nature of just who Jesus is. As you will have found ... it is a tough task!

- ❖ John uses his human senses in verse 1. Why do you think he does that?
- ❖ At the end of verse 1, he then relates these to "The Word of life", rather than "Jesus". Why?
- ❖ What aspects of the Gospel story do you think might be in his mind as he writes verse 2?
- ❖ How do these verses connect with the opening verses of his Gospel, which you read earlier?

John's use of "The Word" in both his Gospel and Letters is an important thing to think about. In using this terminology, he is intentionally making Jesus far more than just a human being in the mind of his readers: whereas the other Gospel writers speak of Jesus "coming from Nazareth", John wants to say that Jesus "comes from eternity". He wants us to understand that Jesus did not "begin" at Bethlehem but "was from the beginning" of time itself (v1) and that he "appeared" (v2) on earth – rather than "began" at Bethlehem.

- ❖ Why is this important in our understanding of who Jesus is?
- ❖ And why is it important that we gain this understanding?

Read 1 John 1:3-4. The argument in these verses is in many ways quite simple:

- John knew Jesus personally as a human being.
- Jesus was the visible representation of God (see Hebrews 1:3) - he revealed God to us (John 14:9).
- If people believe what John says (v3), then they can "have fellowship" (ie be one in spirit) with John.
- And, therefore, because John knows God, people who have fellowship with John can have fellowship with God (v3)
- And this makes John very happy (v4)!

It is sometimes useful to understand something by looking at the other side of the coin

- If Jesus had not existed before Bethlehem ...
- If Jesus was not born as the visible representation of God ...
- If Jesus is not the absolute "light" and "life" ...

... then how does this affect our faith?

- **Walk**

As we begin to look at what the life of Jesus means in the world today ...

- How do you understand the idea that Jesus as God?
- What one thing in this study has struck you for the first time?
- What has challenged you?
- What do you need to go away and think through further?

Share these things as you are able – you are not likely to be the only one who is thinking what you are thinking! Pray for each other and for your worshipping community that God will change you through the work of the Holy Spirit. Also, **Pray** for any other specific issues people are facing in the Life Group. If you haven't done so, it is a great idea to start a prayer diary, recording the things you have prayed for and seeing how God answers your prayers!

- **Next Time ...**

1 John 1:5-10 – Totally Forgiven

Totally, utterly and completely? Honestly?

