

Reflections on the Gospel of John

As a young man who had been raised to go to church on Sunday and meet with brethren at mid-week, I had a religious upbringing. It was the right thing to do to go to church and participate in the acts of worship. I understood that good people would be in attendance and many would be there who I had known all my life. But, as I matured and began to make life decisions of my own, many of the younger people that had attended church with me began to fall away. They no longer saw the value in attendance or religious practices.

As time passed, and I began a career, married a wonderful young lady and moved to a new community away from family and brethren I had known all my life. Choices had to be made: would I continue to attend church services; would I participate in worship services; if so, why. It was then I realized that I may well have been converted to a life style of people I respected and not converted to serving the Lord Jesus. I remember asking one of the elders of the church in my new community about how to help myself and young people like me grow in faith. It was then I began to truly read the Scriptures; not just random verses to prove a doctrinal point but read the letters themselves.

The book of John was one book that openly spoke to me. I felt like it was written just to me and especially for me. I felt certain that if co-workers or some of my church friends who had fallen away would just read this book with an open mind; they would understand the value of spiritual mindedness. It was John that supplied the answers to why I attended church on Sundays and went back at mid-week, and why it was easy to deny self and submit to the Lord's will in making life decisions.

The apostle John knew that people like me would not know who Jesus was. We would not have the value of seeing him or reacting to his warm and compassionate disposition to others. John is written to answer questions about who Jesus was and why he is worthy of our devotion and commitment to serve him above all others. For this reason I chose to read the first 14 verses of John chapter 1 to each of my four children before they ever left the hospital. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."* John 1:1-2.

My goal with these series of lessons is to help us better understand who Jesus is and why he is worthy of our service and reverence. Jesus makes claims that no other man has ever made. Eyewitnesses have proclaimed him to be the **"Lamb of God"** and the **"Son of God"**. Heaven has spoken and proclaimed his glory. Ordinary people have benefited from his compassion and power. He, who was in the beginning, knows where I am, cares for my guests, and cries for my loss. He understands my weaknesses and guides me into all truth. Those who are of the truth hear his voice. He opens the door to life eternal and will lead us along life's way if we will only follow and trust in Him.

Each of us must be fully convinced that our faith (belief) is grounded in Jesus. It is true that our religious service is beneficial and a ritual that may satisfy our own conscience before God. We must examine our religious motivation as genuine and sincere as we each respond to Jesus' question to Simon Peter, *"Do you truly love me more than these?"* – John 21:15