

PORTRAITS OF GOD'S LOVE

Outline: A 12 Week Bible Study in the Gospel of John
Compiled by Marleen Bahr - 2010

Jesus, the Son of God became the Son of man in order to demonstrate the depth of the Father's love so that we could become the children of God and in turn represent God in our world.

Lesson #1

John's Background & Introduction to John's Gospel

John 1:1-18, John 3:16 and 1 John 3:1

Lesson #2

The Portrait of God's Presence at a Wedding

John 2:1-12 "The Show Begins!"

Lesson #3

The Portrait of God's Purpose for Sending Jesus

John 3:1-21 "The Key to the Kingdom"

Lesson #4

The Portrait of God's Unconditional Love and Compassion (women Included)

John 4:1-26 "To Know Me is to Love Me"

Lesson #5

The Portrait of God's Power over Physical Problems

John 5: 1-30 "God Pictures Total Wholeness"

Lesson #6

The Portrait of God as the Bread of Life

John 6:1-40. "Feed me till I Want no More"

Lesson #7

The Portrait of Jesus as the Good Shepherd

John 10: 1-21 "Secure in Him"

Lesson #8

The Portrait of God's Power over Life & Death

John 11:1-44 "Unwrap us and set us Free"

Lesson #9

The Portrait of Extravagant Acceptance

John 12:1-10 "Much Forgiveness=Much Love"

Lesson #10: The Portrait of Servant Love

John 13:1-20 "Serve one another in love."

Lesson #11: The Portrait of God in the Vineyard

John 15:1-16 "Three in One at Work"

Lesson #12: The Portrait of God on His Knees

John 17:1-26 – "Your Love for Me will be in Them"

This study is adaptable for a fall or winter study. It is especially suitable for a winter study followed by a special Good Friday lunch where the death and resurrection of Jesus are celebrated. A similar celebration could happen at Christmas following a fall study.

PORTRAITS OF GOD'S LOVE

Introduction and the Apostle John's Background

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Greetings and Opening Prayer

Introduction:

When we moved from 1999 into the year 2000 there was much speculation and a fair bit of fear and trepidation. The world is coming to an end! Now ten years later, and many changes we step into a new decade with different fears and new concerns. The more things change the greater my desire to dig deeper into the stability and depth of God's love.

Read: John 1: 1-18, John 3:16 and 1 John 3:1

God's Eternal Plan

1. What were the major preparations(in heaven and on earth) which took place before Jesus could enter our world?

2. How does John display God's love differently from the other three Gospels?

3. What do we know about the author of St. John? How did he first meet Jesus? What was he called? What do we learn about God's love by examining the relationship Jesus had with John?

6. In order to get a true picture of God's love we need to see Jesus not only as the Son of God but as God in human form? How might this impact my feelings about God's love for me?

Meet in small groups for prayer.

Suggested size of groups is 3 or 4 at the most. Pray specifically for the freedom of God's Spirit to be demonstrated as you pray for each other. Allow women to express their needs in prayer and then have the others pray specifically for her before moving on to the prayer concerns of the next individual. After completing your prayer time move quietly back to the main area or be quietly dismissed.

Next week: "God's Presence at a Wedding" John 2:1-12
In preparation picture yourself as the Wedding Photographer moving about the room. What pictures would you take?

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #2 God’s Appearance at a Wedding

Greetings and Opening Prayer

Introduction: Over the years we have met many wonderful and some different wedding guests. At one hot summer wedding a big black dog wandered in at the side door. I have never experienced the turning of my water into wine but you can imagine the ripple of excitement as people began to discover what happened at this wedding in Cana. This was the first official public miracle Jesus performed.

Read: John 2:1-12,

Wedding Photographer:

1. As you walked through the different activities of the wedding celebration what attracted your attention?

(Discuss)

2. What do you think Mary expected Jesus to do and what does this tell us of how she saw her son?

3. Why do you think Jesus responded the way he did to his mother, saying his time wasn’t come and then went ahead and gave directions to the servants?

4. What did Jesus prove by turning the water into wine and how did this miracle change his life?

5. What can we learn about God’s love and compassion from this story? How does this apply to us?

Meet in small groups for prayer.

Pray that God will open our inner eyes to see the amazing depth of His love. We are loved far more deeply than we realize.

Next week: “God’s Purpose for Sending Jesus”

In Preparation read: John 3:1-21 Almighty God is trying to express through Jesus why He came. He says, “My specific reason for coming is:

PORTRAITS OF GOD'S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #3

The Portrait of God's Purpose in Sending Jesus

Greetings and Opening Prayer

Introduction: A Powerful Impact

A famous preacher who was nearing the end of his public ministry was once asked, "What is it that has had the most powerful impact on you and your ministry?" After a brief pause he slowly replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know." How would you express the affect of His love on your life?

Read: John 3: 1-21

John 3:16 – The Gospel (Good News) in a nut shell:

1. Reread John 3:5-8.

How does John introduce the work of the Holy Spirit and reveal the work of the Trinity in the new birth? What do you think Nicodemus was really asking?

In your own words explain how you think the Spirit of God introduces us into the family or the Kingdom of God.

2. In John 3:10-15 John refers to Moses lifting up a bronze snake in the wilderness. Read the story in Numbers 21: 8&9 and then explain how this compares to the Son of Man being lifted up?

3. What would you say was the most powerful impact in causing you to make a positive step towards following Christ? According to verses 18-21 what is it that keeps people from saying "yes" to the promptings of the Spirit.

4. According to 1 John 3:1 we have the reassurance that God has lavished His love on us and made us His children. How do we demonstrate to those who don't yet know God that we are His children?

Meet in small groups for prayer.

In Preparation for next week: Read: John 4:1-42:

"God's Unconditional Love and Compassion"

As an additive to your personal study work through the Great Canadian Bible Study (Available from Women In Focus) about the woman at the well. Study her and take her picture. Ask her for a drink and see how you think she would respond to your question.

PORTRAITS OF GOD'S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #4 The Portrait of God's Unconditional Love

Greetings and Opening Prayer - Introduction

Would you care about me if you really knew me?

Let's go back in time and be reporters or photographers tagging along with Jesus and His disciples. Nobody knows who we are or what we've done. If we encountered the woman before she reaches Jesus, what questions might you ask and what pictures would you take?

Read: John 4: 1-26 – A Woman's Insatiable Thirst:

1. After reading this portion of John 4 what was the woman's greatest need and what need did Jesus have? What did he seem to want to accomplish?

2. What do you know about the beliefs of the Samaritans? Why were they at odds with the "true" Jews?

3. The woman spoke & heard in natural\physical terms while Jesus spoke with spiritual words. Explain

4 How did the woman change the subject when Jesus asked her to go get her husband? What do you notice about how Jesus dealt with the sins of this woman? How would you have responded when you heard her story?

5. What was the end result of the discussion Jesus had with this woman? (vv 39-42) What can we learn from Jesus about how to reach out to those around us with God's love?

Prayer Time: Divide into small groups. Be very sensitive to each other being careful not to act surprised if someone is vulnerable with something she feels she needs to confess. Invite the presence of Jesus to have an impact on your prayers.

Next week: "God's Power over Physical Problems"

Read: John 5:1-30: How does this scripture reveal the bigger picture of God's love for those who are sick as well as for those who have not yet found wholeness in Jesus?

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #5

Portrait of God’s Power over Physical Problems
God Pictures Total Wholeness - John 5:1-30

Greetings and Opening Prayer - Introduction

Begin by discussing last weeks prep question. What did you discover about the love of Jesus for those who are physically ill? What about those who are reaching out for spiritual wholeness?

Read: John 5: 1-30 – Jesus demonstrates God’s love and purpose by healing the lame man on the Sabbath and then he deals with the results of his actions.

1. After Jesus left Samaria he went to Galilee and began to teach in earnest. He solidified the group of disciple followers. What do you think he’s demonstrating with the healing of the lame man?

2. What was the second miraculous sign Jesus performed and what was he teaching with this sign? (John 4:36-54)

3. Why did Jesus choose to heal this particular man? What can we learn about prayer for healing from the question Jesus asks in verse 6?

4 Who did Jesus target with this healing sign and how was God’s love demonstrated?

5. What truth did Jesus try to impress on the Jewish leaders (and on the disciples). What can we learn from this when we reach out to those who are sick?

Prayer Time:

Next week: “God Portrayed as the ‘Bread of Life’ ”

Read: John 6:1-40. How does this scripture reveal the deeper power of the presence of God in our daily lives. How do you assimilate the ‘Bread of Life’ into your daily life?

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

**Study #6 Portrait of God as the Bread of Life
Our Spiritual Sustenance - John 6:1-15, 22-40**

Opening Prayer - Introduction

We can only understand partially what it is like to be extremely hungry. Share briefly what it must have been like for the people in Haiti to receive food from the sky after not having had anything for days. Share a time when you experienced a deep hunger for the things of God and then of being fed spiritually.

Read: John 6: 1-15 – Jesus Provides Food for 5000

1. Why do you think people went out to see and hear Jesus without bringing food?

2. What truth was Jesus trying to teach by involving Philip, Andrew, the young boy and his disciples?

How might you have been involved in this “feast”?

Read: John 6:22-40

3. Why were the people seeking Jesus and what did Jesus pinpoint as their deeper need?

4 How is the response of the people in verse 34 like the response of the woman at the well and how does the response of Jesus compare to his response to the woman?

5. What did Jesus say would truly satisfy the deepest hunger of their hearts? How does this apply to our hunger for a deeper knowledge of God and what might he be saying to us to enlighten our understanding?

Prayer Time:

Next week: “God Portrayed as the ‘Good Shepherd’ ”

Read: John 10:1-21. Jesus says he is the Good Shepherd but he also says that he is the Door. What does he mean and what does he do for the sheep?

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #7 Portrait of God as the Good Shepherd

Our Security Forever - John 10:1-30

Opening Prayer - Introduction

In order to make the transition of Jesus as the Bread of Life to Jesus(God) as the Good Shepherd we need to look at John 9:1-7 where we learn Jesus has healed a man blind from birth – who has lived in physical darkness all his life. The disciples wanted to know who was to blame for his blindness, he or his parents? Jesus says, “neither, – but that the works of God be revealed in him.”

Read: John 10: 1-6 – A Hidden Truth in a Parable

1. What is the hidden truth Jesus taught here? Who are his “students”?

2. In verse 7-10 Jesus says “I am the door.”? How and to what is Jesus the door and how can a door give life?

3. What is the “abundant life” or “life to the full” that Jesus gives? Make a list of benefits you have experienced as a result of entering into this abundant life.

Read 10:11-26

4 To what length will a shepherd go for his sheep?

5. Who were the “hirelings” or false shepherds? Who might they be in our lives today?

6. Read 10:22-30

What is the reaction of the Jewish leaders when Jesus expresses honor to God, as His heavenly Father? How does this underline his own identity as the true Shepherd of the sheep?

Prayer Time: Invite the Spirit of God to speak freely as you meet in your small groups.

Next week: “God’s Power Over Life & Death”

Read: **John 11:1-44** and discover how each person in this chapter dealt with the death of Lazarus – his sisters, his friends and Jesus. How might you have dealt with your feelings towards Jesus if you were a close family friend? Write a possible personal scenario in your journal.

PORTRAITS OF GOD'S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #8 Portrait of God's Power over Life & Death

“Unwrap Us & Set Us Free” - John 11:1-44

Opening Prayer - Introduction

During our ministry time in Calgary we developed a close relationship with a couple and their two children. We stood by each other in a number of crisis. Over the years we drifted apart but even last summer when we visited Calgary we met for lunch and a time of sharing. On New Year's Eve (2009) we received the news that Gayle had been ushered into the presence of her Lord. Her long struggle with cancer was over. I wish we could have been there for them in those last days?

Read: John 11:1-16, Setting the Scene for a Great Sign

1. What is the background for this picture? What do we know about Bethany and about the relationship Jesus has with this family? What is happening?

2. In verse 9-15 what important truth is Jesus trying to impress on his disciples? What were their concerns?

Read 11:17-37

3. Set the scene in Bethany when Jesus arrives. Jesus didn't cry when he got word of Lazarus' death but he wept with Mary as they went to the tomb. Why? If you had been there what feelings would you have experienced?

Read 11:38-44

4. Why was Jesus angry when he knew what God wanted to demonstrate by raising Lazarus from death? What was Martha's concern?

5. How are we like Martha and how might we be like Lazarus? What can we learn from Jesus' words, "Unwrap him and let him go!"?

Prayer Time: Spent time thanking God for the New Life we have because of the death & resurrection of Jesus.

Next week: “God's Extravagant Acceptance”

Read: John 12:1-10

Try to imagine yourself in Mary's position. This follows her experience of having Lazarus raised from the dead.

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #9 Portrait of God’s Extravagant Acceptance

“Much Forgiveness=Much Love” - John 12:1-10

Opening Prayer - Introduction

We were all shocked when we heard that Joannie Rochette’s mother had died of a massive heart attach in her hotel room during the 2010 Olympics. Joannie decided to skate for her mother. How moving this was! When a close family member or friend dies we want to honor the one who has passed away; to say or do something that emphasizes our appreciation of who they were. In today’s lesson Mary is showing her deep love for Jesus – before His death.

Read: John 12:1-10,

1. After Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead He stops His public ministry and leaves Jerusalem. Where did he go and why do you think He left? (see John 11:51-57)

2. What do you think was tone and conversation of Jesus and his disciples on their walk back down to Bethany?

3. Now Jesus is back in Bethany attending a dinner party given in his honor. Martha is serving while Lazarus is a

guest. How had Jesus met the deepest need in Mary, in Martha, and in Lazarus?

4. Jesus knew His death was immanent. What human needs could his friends meet for him during this evening?

5. How does Mary help meet one of these needs and who is opposed to what she does? Why?

Share an experience where you experienced God’s extravagant love and forgiveness?

Prayer Time: Once again be very sensitive as you listen to each other and pray specifically for anyone who shares.

Next week: “The Portrait of Servant Love”

Read: John 13:1-20

Make note of how many different ways Jesus demonstrates God’s love for his disciples by what He does and says in this amazing scripture lesson.

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study # 10 - The Portrait of Servant Love

“Serve One Another in Love” - John 13:1-20

Opening Prayer - Introduction

In preparation for this lesson let’s think of a time when we prepared a meal with very heavy hearts. How well I recall helping in the preparation for Christmas dinner soon after my dad passed away. Things just were not the same without Dad’s deep and jovial voice. How many ways did you find that Jesus demonstrated a servant heart in today’s study?

Read: John 13:1-11,

1. Set the scene in your mind as Jesus and his disciples prepare for a very serious meal together. It was just before the Passover Feast. Why was this meal especially serious?

2 What did John mean when he said, “he now showed them the full extent of his love”?

3 An evil scheme was in progress. Satan seemed to have the next move. Jesus however made a relaxed and mighty

move where he once more demonstrated the Father’s love. What did he do and how was it received?

4. Why did Peter not want his feet washed by Jesus and how do you explain the response of Jesus?

5. Did the disciples understand what Jesus did? Do we? How do we wash each other’s feet?

(If your open are open to an actual foot washing event this would be an appropriate time to wash each others feet)

Prayer Time: You might want to “symbolically” wash each other’s feet.

Next week: “The Portrait of God in the Vineyard”

Read: John 15:1-16

Move with Jesus away from the Upper Room and listen while he teaches deep truth while they walk. Read chapter 15-17 if possible and see if you can pick out the main theme.

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #11 – The Portrait of God in the Vineyard
“The Triune God at Work” - John 15:1-17

Opening Prayer - Introduction

During the past two weeks our discussion has been about our love and appreciation for our Lord and how we can demonstrate God’s love for others by practicing servant love. After washing the feet of his disciples it appears that Jesus had some quality time to continue to teach some valuable lessons. In context with today’s lesson let’s read, **John 14:15-31**. After this teaching they leave and move towards the Garden of Gethsemane. It seems that the teaching of chapters 15-17 takes place as they move towards the place where he prayed and was arrested.

Read: John 15:1-17

1. Where might this teaching have taken place? As Jesus saw the branches that had been pruned what spiritual truth did he teach?

2 Why do you think Jesus emphasized the importance of remaining in Him in order to be fruitful?

3 According to verse 8 we are to bear much fruit and it seems to be a sign of being a true disciple. What is the fruit we are to bear? (See also Gal. 5:22)

4. How did Jesus challenge his disciples to remain in his love?

5. What is the prescription given here so we can experience the complete joy of Jesus?

Spend a few moments sharing moments when the presence of Jesus has been very real in your life. Share moments of experiencing the joy of Jesus.

Prayer Time:

Next week: “The Portrait of God on His Knees”

Read: John 17:1-26 - The Lord’s Prayer for His Disciples and for Us

Put yourself in the Olive Grove as Jesus prays for his disciples.

PORTRAITS OF GOD’S LOVE

A 12 week study in the Gospel of St. John

Study #12 – The Portrait of God on His Knees

“Love for Us Demonstrated in Prayer”

John 17:1-26

Opening Prayer - Introduction

In this scripture we are allowed to ‘listen in’ on the actual prayer of Jesus. This is his longest recorded prayer and took place near the garden of Gethsemane. John does not go into detail of the agony in the garden. This would have taken place as soon as they crossed the Kidron Valley. In the next chapter Jesus is arrested. This prayer is in three sections so let’s look at the first section.

Read: John 17:1-5 “Jesus Prays for Himself”

1. Why might Jesus begin in the 2nd person rather than speaking directly to his Father? What is the deep longing of Jesus expressed in this prayer?

Read: John 17: 6-19 “Jesus Prays for His Disciples”

2. a) What do we see here about the amazing relationship Jesus had with his Father?

b) Why did Jesus say that the disciples belonged to the Father before they belonged to him?

3. Think about the protection and safety the disciples experienced because of Jesus. Why did Jesus want His Father to protect the disciples by his name?

4. What did Jesus want the Father to show the disciples so they would be able to sense and know his on going care for them? Who could hinder their security\safety?

Read: John 17:20-26 “Jesus Prays for All Believers”

5. What is the hearts desire of Jesus as he looks into the future and prays for those, (us) who would come to faith?

Prayer Time: Pray specifically for each other.

(I suggest you bring your study to a close with a fellowship lunch or plan a breakfast or lunch meeting for the following week. It is good to take a break for a couple of weeks before moving on to a new study.)

Marleen Bahr – Thank-you for choosing this study.