



COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

JOHN'S
UPPER ROOM
DISCOURSE

NARRABEEN BAPTIST CHURCH
AUTUMN 2019

INTRODUCTION

John chapters 13 to 17 are some of the most insightful passages into the heart of Jesus. These chapters contain not only the single largest block of Jesus' teaching, but also give the reader a view into what Jesus thinks is most important to pass onto his disciples before his death on the cross.

Many have approached this section of Scripture as the very last words Jesus said, knowing his death was imminent. If that's the case, think about WHO you would want to spend your time with and WHAT you would want to talk about if you knew you only had hours left to live. That's essentially what is happening here in John's Gospel.

There are some questions for us, as Jesus' disciples, to ask ourselves. If these words are that important for Jesus to share in his final moments, are we listening? Are we responding as he instructed us? This study will help us to wrestle through these questions together as we dive deeply into not just the text itself, but how these words come alive in us today.



WEEK ONE: JOHN 13:31-38

Read John 13:31-33.

Judas has just gone out to betray Jesus to the religious authorities after Jesus washed every foot of every disciple (even Judas). So Jesus turns to his remaining disciples and he lets them know the long awaited time is now here.

What does Jesus mean when he talks about “God glorifying the Son of Man” (verse 31)?

To give greater clarity on what Jesus means when he talks about being “glorified” have a quick look at these passages:

John 7:39

John 12:16

John 17:1

In verse 33, what endearing term does Jesus use for his disciples? How does Jesus’ use of this word demonstrate his affection for us?

Jesus then goes on in that same verse to tell his followers that they will look for him but be unable to find him... because where he is going, they cannot come. It is clear through the rest of Jesus’ upper room discourse that he’s speaking about two different but intersecting destinations. The first of these destinations that Jesus is speaking of is referred to in verses 36-38. The second of these destinations Jesus speaks about in John 14:1-4. Based on these verses, what destinations is Jesus talking about?

How do the ideas of laying down one’s life (John 13:36-38) work alongside spending eternity at the Father’s side (John 14:1-4)?

Have we as Christians, have YOU, adopted one of those ideas as good and right but not the other? In other words, is it possible to experience eternity if you're not willing to lay down your life?

How much are you like Peter, who says he'd willingly lay down his life for Jesus (verse 37), but when he actually was put in a position to put his words into practice (literally) chickened out (verse 38)?

Read John 13:34-35.

The instruction in these verses IS the most predominant theme throughout these chapters. John, the author of this gospel, also authored the letters of 1, 2 and 3 John (toward the end of the New Testament). In those writings (especially 1 John), Jesus' command is repeated over and over again.

What word does Jesus repeat four times in these two verses?

What is this sort of love meant to look like?

If we as Jesus followers take this command seriously, what is the outcome?

After reading this command, give your definition of a disciple. Does this description match your life at the moment? How are you or how are you not displaying this command in your life? Be specific!

The word Jesus uses here for "love" is the Greek word *agape* (pronounced "ah-gah-pay"). It was one of several words that can be translated as "love" into the English language. Other words the New Testament authors use for "love" are *philos* (loyal, friendship love), *eros* (romantic, emotional love), *storge* (natural love for one's family). However, this word *agape* is quite different to the other "love" words. *Agape* literally means unconditional love, love that gives even if it never receives. Love that isn't bound by circumstances or emotions, but freely given even at great expense from the giver. Paul uses this same word in 1 Corinthians 13, the

famous “wedding chapter” (love is patient, love is kind...). The thing about agape, though, is that it’s a love only God can give. We as humans can’t naturally manufacture this sort of love for ourselves. So, in order to “love one another” we must be intimately connected to the One who loved us (“as I have loved you”).

If this is true, does your love come from your own strength and emotions? Or does your love derive from God’s perfect love... that you are able to love people even if they don’t love you back in return?

What can we do to demonstrate this kind of love this week?



WEEK TWO: JOHN 14:1-7

Read John 14:1-4.

This section comes immediately after two significant and saddening events: Jesus reveals Judas is about to betray him (John 13:18-30) and he informs Peter that, despite his stated intentions, Peter will disown Jesus on three separate occasions (John 13:38). Understandably, the mood in the room at this point is pretty heavy.

Sensing this, Jesus then gives his troubled disciples some of the most reassuring truths in all of Scripture. What three things does Jesus promise his followers in these verses? Are these promises at all significant to you?

How does Jesus describe his relationship with the Father in these verses? Why should the disciples “believe in Jesus” like they “believe in God”?

John here is using a common event that happened in ancient Jewish families. When a man and woman became engaged, both the man and the woman would go off on their own to prepare themselves for the wedding and their marriage. The man would often get to work building a home for his new family. Usually this new home would be built on top of or attached to the home of his parents. The husband would then return for the wedding, sweep up his bride and take her back to the room or “mansion” of his father’s house, that was built specifically for her. It was a vivid picture that said to his bride “you are now and forever part of this family”.

So, using this imagery, what is Jesus saying about himself? What is he saying about us?

Have you ever thought of yourself as being invited into God's family?

How does this imagery of being made family relate back to Jesus' command to "love one another" from John 13? Do you look at the other people in your church community like you do your family? Do you love them like family? If you don't, what can you do to change?

Read John 14:5-7.

Thomas clearly doesn't understand what Jesus is talking about (which makes sense if the disciples don't understand Jesus' impending death). The word Thomas uses when he says "We don't know where you are going" is the Greek word *eido*, which literally means to know something by visual observation. So, Thomas is essentially saying to Jesus, "I don't know what you are talking about, Jesus, because I can't see the Father and I can't see this place you are preparing for me."

How then does Jesus respond to Thomas' inability to know/see this reality in verse 6? How does Jesus say we can know/see the Father and know/see our heavenly home (see also verse 7)?

How would you explain John 14:6 in your own words? According to Jesus is there no other way to get the Father? How does that sit with you?

John 14:6 is one of several "I Am" statements Jesus makes throughout John's Gospel. When Jesus made these statements, the Jewish leaders understood he was claiming to be God. After one instance of this, the text tells us "they took up stones to throw at him" (John 8:59). C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* wrote, "a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something

worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.”

If Lewis is correct, what are we to make of Jesus’ exclusive claims?

What is your response to Jesus? Is he Lord of your life? Or just a great moral teacher?



WEEK THREE: JOHN 14:7-15

Read John 14:7.

What is Jesus saying about his relationship with the Father? If people are curious to know what is God like, where can they find their answer?

Another way to put Jesus' words is this:

If you really know (understand/believe in/see) me, then you know (understand/believe in/see) the Father. And guess what? You do know the Father... because you have seen Him in me.

How does this answer the questions people often ask: "how do I know God is real? What is God really like?"

Read John 14:8.

How does Philip misunderstand what Jesus just said? What does his statement reveal about what he really understands about Jesus?

Read John 14:9-11.

In the middle of this most precious moment, yet another disciple fails the test. First Judas leaves to betray Jesus. Then Peter emphatically claims he'll die for Jesus (but is shown he'll in fact deny him three times). And now Philip demonstrates that he's certainly interested in God the Father, but doesn't think the Father and Jesus are equals. Philip probably views Jesus as merely a spokesperson for God, not God Himself.

What is Jesus' response to Philip?

What evidence does Jesus provide him that the Father and he are one?

Do you ever struggle with the concept of the Trinity? Do you, like Philip, elevate one person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Spirit) over the others? (How do you know you do this? Just examine the language you use. If you find yourself talking about the Spirit all the time but very little or nothing about Jesus, then you may have elevated one member of the Trinity over the others).

Read John 14:12-15.

What do you think Jesus means in verse 12 when he says, “they will do ever greater things than these”? Does Jesus really mean his followers will be able to do more miraculous things than he did? Is this true of your life? If not, what is he talking about? Should we just ignore this passage altogether?

In verses 13-14, Jesus says that whatever we ask for in his name, he’ll do it. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?



WEEK FOUR: JOHN 14:15-24

Read John 14:15-17.

Jesus begins this section by making a seemingly conditional statement: “IF you love me, keep my commands.” The word Jesus uses for “love” here is the Greek word *agape*, which elsewhere in the New Testament refers to the unconditional love God shows us, that we can only show to one another with God’s help. Can Jesus be both unconditionally loving and at the same time make a conditional statement about our relationship with him? How do you reconcile these two ideas?

What is the result, according to verse 16, of our love and obedience to Jesus?

The word for “advocate” (some other translations say “Helper”) in Greek is the word *parakletos*, which is a notoriously difficult word to translate into English. It is made up of two other Greek words *para*, which means “beside” and *keleo*, meaning “to call”. In other words, this “Helper” is someone that has been called alongside the believer. The picture this paints is of someone who stands alongside you fighting for you, advocating for you, speaking up for you, stepping in on your behalf.

How does Jesus describe this Advocate’s relationship to the believer?

Why can’t the world accept this Spirit?

How do we know the Spirit?

Do you know the Spirit? How so?

Read John 14:18-21.

Jesus begins talking here about either his death or ascension or both. His words make it seem like his upcoming disappearance is a really good thing. Why?

What is the interplay between love for Jesus and keeping his commands? Can you do one without the other? What is the result here of keeping Jesus' commands and loving him?

Read John 14:22-24.

Judas (not Iscariot) is asking an interesting question. He is trying to follow the timeline of what Jesus is talking about and is following his logic (which the other disciples don't seem to understand). But then he asks Jesus, "if you are going away and if that going away is a good thing and that good thing results in us discovering who you really are, why are we the only recipients? Why not reveal who you really are to everyone?" Maybe it's a question you've asked yourself. Why doesn't (or didn't) Jesus just appear in a laser light show of epic proportions and do some crazy stuff that will blow our minds so that everyone, definitively, will come to see him for who he really is? This is what the Jewish people believed the Messiah was going to do – show up with power and wealth and authority and wipe out all the enemies and people not like us and establish God's kingdom on earth.

Why, do YOU think, Jesus doesn't show himself to the world? Why sneak in quietly (see John 1:9-11) and go out quietly? What is the logic in only showing who he really is to those that love him and follow him?

Jesus is doing something interesting here. Chapter 14 begins with Jesus telling his followers that he and the Father are intimately intertwined. They are so close, that Jesus has access to his Father's house. In 14:2, Jesus says his Father's house has many rooms (the Greek word for "rooms" is the word *mone*), and Jesus is about to go there to prepare a place for them. Now in 14:23, Jesus uses this same word again – "My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home (*mone*) with them." He begins this

section talking about a future home for us with the Father (in heaven). Jesus ends by talking about the Father making His home in us.

If that is the case, Jesus is essentially answering Judas' question ("why show yourself to only us and not the world?") this way: YOU are how I show myself to the world (because I/the Father/the Spirit is in you).

Does this describe your life right now? Do people see Jesus for who he is because of him living and working through you? Why or why not?

What do you think it looks like to show Jesus to the world through your life?

How can you start doing that this week?



WEEK FIVE: JOHN 14:25-31

Read John 14:25-27.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit according to these verses?

How have you experienced the Spirit working in your life the way Jesus describes here?

When Jesus talks about his “peace” he’s probably using the Hebrew word *shalom*. The word *shalom* means more than just “the absence of conflict”, as we normally use it. *Shalom* means “wholeness” and “everything in its right place”. Jesus’ departure is obviously hard news that will have great effect on his disciples. How do you think we can experience wholeness if Jesus isn’t physically with us?

What does Jesus mean when he says, “I do not give as the world gives”?

What troubles your heart and causes you to be afraid? How can we practically live in such a way as to not be burdened by fear or worry?

Read John 14:28-31.

Do you think it was hard for the disciples to believe Jesus was coming back? Is it hard for YOU to believe? Why or why not?

Why do you think Jesus said his disciples “would be glad that I am going to the Father”?

Who is the “prince of this world” and what, according to Jesus, is the purpose of his existence?

Does the “prince of this world” have the same sort of power as Jesus?

If you follow Jesus' logic – with his departure comes his very Spirit living within us and empowering us. So, this same enemy Jesus has (the prince of this world) who holds no power over him will therefore hold no power over us because He is inside us. Do you think this is true? Is this true of your life?



WEEK SIX:
JOHN 15:1-17

Read Psalm 80:8-16 and Isaiah 5:1-7.

According to these verses, who is the “vine”?

How does God view this vine? What does God end up doing with this vine?

Read John 15:1-8.

How does Jesus distinguish himself from the “other vines” that have come before?

According to Jesus (and to nature) what happens to a branch that gets disconnected from its vine, its source?

What does Jesus mean when he says that “every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (verse 2)? What do you think that looks like? Has this ever happened in YOUR life? Is it happening now? Why or why not?

Do you really believe that apart from Jesus, you can do nothing (verse 5)?

What do you think Jesus means when he instructs us to “remain/abide in him”?

What do you think it means to bear fruit?

Read John 15:9-17.

Jesus now gets into more detail, expanding on what it means to remain and bear fruit in this section. His general premise is this:

Remaining in Him = obeying His commands = loving one another as Jesus has loved you (laying down His life).

Knowing this, if we go back in the text, it will give us a more specific meaning of the vine illustration Jesus uses. Remaining in Jesus essentially means two things: staying intimately connected to Jesus and staying intimately connected with others. We've seen Jesus repeat this same idea in the other Gospels. When asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus gives a two-part, interconnected answer: love God with all you have and love others as you love yourself (see Matthew 22:36-40).

These concepts are very simple to understand. Jesus doesn't require us to jump through a million hoops to follow him and experience the love of God in our lives. Jews who were trying to be faithful to the Jewish Law believed they had to carefully obey 613 different commands found in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament). Jesus calls us to obey TWO!

Though following Jesus is simple to understand, it can be very difficult to actually put into practice. Jesus invites us into something beautiful – to not try and earn salvation for ourselves, but to rest in him. When we are able to “be” that, the fruit will come naturally. Fruit is not something we are called to produce on our own, it is the natural overflow of a life connected to Jesus.

Jesus has, throughout these chapters, mentioned several examples of the fruit we will experience when we remain in him. Have a look at these verses:

John 15:7

John 15:11

John 14:12-14

John 14:15-17

John 14:27

John 16:24

John 16:33

John 17:23

Does your life right now reflect any of this fruit Jesus speaks of?

If you are not experiencing this fruit, why not? How can you put yourself in a place where Jesus will produce fruit in your life?

Several times throughout these chapters, Jesus says something many of us may find interesting: “whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” (John 15:16). What do you think Jesus means by this? Is this now or has it ever been your experience? Why or why not? Why do you think we don’t experience this answer to prayer more regularly?

What practices can you put into place this week to remain in Jesus’ love and to love others as Jesus loved you?



WEEK SEVEN: JOHN 15:18-16:5A

Earlier in John 15, we discovered that bearing fruit (such as joy or peace) is a natural by-product of staying connected to Jesus. In the remainder of this chapter and into chapter 16 as well, Jesus discusses another “fruit” that is produced when we love him and love others.

Read John 15:18-21.

Jesus knows he’s about to be crucified. For most of his ministry he was opposed by various groups of people. In John 11 we are told that the Jewish religious leaders devised a plan to get rid of Jesus. Jesus then says that this same hatred he is experiencing from others will also happen to those who remain in him.

Does this world hate you (verse 18) or love you (verse 19)? How do you know? What does that say about you?

Are we meant to be “nice” Christians who don’t offend anyone? Is Jesus really calling us to radical discipleship?

In verse 20, Jesus says “if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” What do you think that sort of persecution looks like? Have you ever experienced persecution because of your love for Jesus?

Read John 15:22-25.

What does Jesus mean when he says if he had not come and spoken and done works, people would not be guilty of sin? Does that mean it’s better for non-believers to NEVER hear about Jesus? [Compare this passage with Matthew 11:20-24] What is Jesus communicating here?

Read John 15:26-27.

Here again Jesus mentions the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the “Advocate” [that’s the Greek word *paraclete*]. As discussed before, this Advocate is one who stands beside you and speaks on your behalf.

What role does this Advocate have in and through the believer in times of persecution?

The word translated “testify” is the Greek word *martureo*, where we get the English word “martyr”. In the New Testament the idea of a martyr is someone who witnesses to the truth of Jesus despite the cost. Does this describe your life at all? Why or why not?

Read John 16:1-5a.

Wouldn’t Jesus telling us about our persecution CAUSE us to fall away instead of preventing it (16:1)?

Are we really in this Christian thing to be persecuted? Are you really willing to be thrown out of public spaces or killed for Jesus?

We live in a place where those sorts of things probably won’t happen to us. Yet many of us still won’t share our love for Jesus publicly. What is it that makes people in certain parts of this world willingly and joyfully endure persecution and even death for Jesus while others who don’t have to face those things shirk away from being witnesses for Him?

Is it possible to NEVER face persecution because of your love for Jesus? Is that biblical? How do you interpret 1 Peter 4:12-16 in light of Jesus’ words?

If you knew persecution was a “fruit” of faithfulness to Jesus, would you have signed up for the Christian life in the first place? Would you now?



WEEK EIGHT: JOHN 16:5B-15

Read John 16:5-11.

If you've been paying attention, you might notice a strange question Jesus asks in verse 5. Peter (in 13:36) and Thomas (in 14:5) both ask Jesus where he is going. So, what's going on here? Some scholars have simply said these chapters are out of order (the last verse of chapter 14 seems to indicate this could be what's happening here). More likely Jesus is answering the question again for them for the reason of giving them additional hope in a time where they seem to be grieving. Jesus has revealed some hard truths and wants his followers to take heart.

For the second time in these chapters, Jesus says it is "good that I am going away". How can it be good for followers of Jesus that he's not physically present with us? What is the reasoning here?

Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus reveals that he is going to send his Spirit, the Advocate, who will stand in our place and defend us. But in verses 8-11, the Spirit is no longer of the defense, but is the one prosecuting. How does Jesus describe the Spirit's role through believers in this passage?

The phrase "he will prove [the world] to be in the wrong" is actually only one word in Greek: the word *elegcho*. The best way to understand this word is that it means to expose. It's a legal term that was used to describe when someone's lies or wrongdoing or ignorance was exposed and that person now stood without excuse. Their guilt was laid out for all to see.

How, practically, does the Spirit "expose" the world to its own sin?

...to its righteousness?

...to its judgment?

What does it mean that the Spirit not only defends you and helps you in times of trial and persecution but goes on the offense for you and exposes the world's emptiness and God's greatness?

Read John 16:12-15.

How does the Spirit function in the life of the believer according to these verses?

In these verses, Jesus says the best thing that could happen to a person is that they receive His Spirit to be in them, to stand with them, to empower them. Yet it is common in the lives of many believers and in theology of many churches to downplay the Spirit's role and importance. Some people and churches live and talk in such a way that the Father and Jesus are great, but never say a word about the Spirit. If Jesus thinks the gift of the Spirit is so vital for us, do we think that too?

How do we often neglect the Spirit in our life?

How can we, as Paul mentions, keep in step with the Spirit?

When Jesus describes His very presence living in us through the Spirit, are we filled with excitement and the feeling of invincibility because Jesus is dwelling in us, or do we take this amazing truth for granted?

Would anyone know by examining your life, that the very power of Jesus is living within you?



WEEK NINE: JOHN 16:16-33

Read John 16:16-28.

This is a meaty section here where Jesus is explaining both his temporary disappearance (because of his death) and his slightly longer disappearance (between his Ascension and Return). Jesus has explained this several times in several places in these passages and although it may be clear to us on the other side of these events, it certainly wasn't clear to the disciples in that moment what he was speaking about.

In verses 19-26, Jesus is talking about the space between his death and resurrection. What does he compare this period with?

How does Jesus frame the suffering we and he will experience on this earth in light of eternity?

What results will happen because of Jesus' death and resurrection (see verses 23-24)?

Read John 16:29-33.

Why is it that the disciples, and people in general, have a hard time understanding Jesus without his death and resurrection? What is it about those events that make the rest of Jesus' teachings and instructions make more sense?

In verse 31, Jesus calls his disciples out for their statement about believing ONLY AFTER Jesus speaks plainly. The indication they give is that "we don't really believe you came from God because you talk in parables and with illustrative language." In the other Gospel accounts, the disciples ask him why Jesus talks this way. Jesus' response? I talk this way so that people won't understand (see Matthew 13:10-17). Wait, what? Why wouldn't Jesus want people to understand him? If the disciples only

believed when they understood Jesus clearly, why didn't he just talk plainly all the time?

Later in John's Gospel we find Thomas doubting Jesus is alive after his death on the cross. He states, "unless I can see him, feel his wounds, I won't believe." Jesus then appears and allows Thomas to indeed see and touch him. Thomas then falls down on his face and declares his belief. Jesus then says "you have believed because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed." Why is "seeing" Jesus or believing when he speaks plainly depicted as a negative thing in John's Gospel? What sort of belief does Jesus want us to have?

In the other Gospel accounts Jesus cries out to the Father, "why have you forsaken me?" Yet in John's Gospel, Jesus expresses confidence that he's never alone (verse 32). How do you reconcile these differences in the text?

In verse 33, Jesus says that he has told the disciples all of these things (about persecution, about the Spirit, about bearing fruit when we remain in him) so that we may have "peace". The word "peace" in modern vernacular typically means "an absence of conflict". This definition clearly is not what Jesus means since the very next thing he says is that we *will* face trouble. So, what do you think Jesus means when he says we will experience peace?

Does the Bible ever promise us a worry-free, comfortable life? If not, why is it that we often get angry or disillusioned at God when we go through hard times?

What, according to Jesus, do we need to do when we experience trouble?

How can we be dependent and empowered by the Spirit everyday – through joyous and turbulent times?



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*Presenting Christ to Everyone
Presenting Everyone Mature in Christ*