

Week 1: "Come and See"

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed timely or relevant to you? Was there anything that made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?
2. Read the whole first chapter of the Gospel of John (John 1:1-51)
 - What stands out most to you in this opening passage, and why do you think the author begins this way?
 - The passage is full of metaphors and themes that the author references throughout the whole gospel narrative. How do they use "light," "life," and "spirit" in this section? What meaning do they imbue, and how do they relate to John 1:14 especially?
 - What other metaphors are being used in this passage and why?
 - This opening passage sets up a sense of movement regarding Jesus. Which groups are coming to John (the Baptist)? To whom is John pointing? Who is moving towards Jesus? Who is moving towards the people following Jesus? In what ways has your life been part of a movement towards Jesus? Who has been involved in your movement and how? Who have you been able to help move?
 - Why do you think Jesus says "come and see" in v. 39? Why does Philip invite Nathaniel to "come and see" in v. 48? What does "seeing" mean here and what is to be seen? How does this relate to vs. 4 and 14?
3. Read Ezekiel 11:19-20. How might the author of John be alluding to these themes in the above passage? In particular how do these words in Ezekiel relate to John 1: 16-17 and John 1:30-33? What are the implications for us as we try to live like Jesus?
4. Read Matthew 7:16-20. This passage comes towards the end of a series of profound ethical teaching by Jesus which has become known as "The Sermon on the Mount". How do these words make you feel? In what ways could these words instill guilt? In what ways could they be used to judge others? In what ways could they empower and encourage us?
5. Read Matthew 5:14-16. How would you describe your own "light"? What does it look like? What causes it to shine and what holds it back? How could you let it shine more?
6. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) to read, reflect, and discuss Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Each share about which qualities it would be possible for others to "come and see" in you, as well as those areas where you need to shine more brightly. Share what encouragements and challenges you can take from this and then spend some time praying for one another.

Practice for the week: Embodying love

This week take a moment at the beginning of each day to center yourself and immerse yourself in God's love. Sit in silence in a relaxed, comfortable posture and focus on your breathing which can help you be present to yourself and more aware of God's presence in and around you. Relax and let go of any tension. Breathe in God's love and as you breathe out, let go of any fear, guilt, shame, anger, or resentment.

Invite God's Spirit by simply opening yourself and surrendering to God's presence. God is already present—completely, generously and without finding fault. As you breathe in and out, take a moment to sink into this reality and consciousness.

Now consciously accept and embody this love. Let Jesus' way of life fill and empower you. Breathe in love and let go of fear. Breathe in acceptance and let go of the need to perform or compete. Breathe in security and let go of the need to be defensive or critical. Breathe in mercy and let go of judgement. Breathe in forgiveness and let go of resentment. Sit quietly and receptively for a few moments.

When you have finished, take this renewed consciousness into your day, and live it.