



**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**  
**January 19 – February 2, 2025**

## 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.

## Week 2: "Abide in Me"

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you?
2. Read John 15:1-12. How does the image of the vine and branches help you to understand your relationship with Jesus?
3. What does it mean to you to remain "connected to the vine"? What practices do you find most helpful and how can you incorporate these into your schedule?
4. Read Philippians 4:6-8. Where does your mind tend to "abide"? Are there patterns of thought that might need pruning to help you stay connected to Jesus?
5. The speaker on Sunday suggested that a better rendering of verse 2 might be "He lifts up every branch in me that bears no fruit." How might this change your understanding of this passage? Can you think of a time you experienced God's care for you during a season that felt "fruitless"?
6. Read 1 John 4:11-12 and 19-21, and read John 15:9-12 again. What do all of these verses tell us about the connection between loving and abiding? How can we love others as Jesus has loved us? Where in your own life do you struggle to make this a reality?
7. Read Ephesians 3:16-19 slowly and prayerfully three times, pausing between each reading. Reflect on how this passage applies to you today. If you feel comfortable doing so, share your thoughts with the group, and then spend some time praying for one another.

### Practice for the week: Abiding in Jesus

Try to continue last week's practice of "embodying love" in order to make this something that is habitual in your life. That practice is included again below.

In addition, think about an activity that helps you to feel connected to God. This may be a contemplative exercise, being in nature, listening to music, reading scripture, practicing a creative art, or any number of other things. Determine a time this week when you can engage in this activity. Put it on your calendar and don't let that time get squeezed out by other demands.

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## Week 3: "I Send You"

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 John 20:19-23. How do you think the disciples felt about being "sent" by Jesus? As a follower of Jesus, what does it mean to you to be "sent"?
3. From the Greek word for "send" we get the English word "apostle," and from the Latin we get "missionary." What meaning and connotation do these English words have for you? Who do you think of when you hear them? How do you identify or not with being an apostle or a missionary?
4. Read John 12:44-46. In some ways these verses summarize the first part of John's Gospel in describing Jesus as one who was sent by God to be light in the world. In what ways are we "sent" to be light? What does that look like in our time and space?
5. Read John 12:23-24. In some ways these verses mark a transition in John's Gospel from presenting Jesus as God's light to revealing Jesus as God's glory. What does this glory look like according to these verses (and the rest of Jesus' life)? How does this relate to what we've previously read in the author's prologue and especially John 1:14? If we think of the expression "in all their glory" as a colloquialism for someone being revealed for their true selves, what does this say about the true nature of God?
6. Read John 21:1-19. How does this passage make you feel? In what ways can you relate to Peter? Given that Peter had let Jesus down so badly, what do Jesus' three questions for him tell us about what qualifies us to be "sent"? How does this relate to the two passages about light and glory above? How might this lift some pressure off our shoulders as people who are "sent" by Jesus? How might it actually qualify and empower us?
7. Break into smaller groups of 2 or 3 (or stay together as a larger group if that feels appropriate) to read, reflect, and discuss John 20:19-23 again. Each share about ways and situations in which you currently feel challenged to be sent as someone who embodies sacrificial love. Also share your fears and anxieties about this. Then spend some time praying for one another to receive God's spirit and God's peace in these situations.

### **Practice for the week: Contemplative Reading of Scripture (*Lectio Divina*)**

This week, take some time to read the story in John 21:1-19 in a complete way called *Lectio Divina* ("sacred reading"). Either read it in a bible or listen to it here:

[www.biblegateway.com/audio/laraye/nkjv/John.21](http://www.biblegateway.com/audio/laraye/nkjv/John.21)

Read it through (or listen) four times in the following way:

- **Read** the passage twice through, slowly and gently. Let the words flow over you. Savor each phrase, believing that God is present and has something for you. No need to search, simply listen for a word or phrase that somehow speaks to you or touches you. It might attract or even disturb you. Spend some time in silence with the word or phrase, just resting in it and allowing it to sink into your heart. Then read the passage slowly again.
- **Reflect** or meditate on the word or phrase that stood out. How might it be speaking to you or challenging you? Allow memories, thoughts or situations evoked by the word to rise up gently. Allow God to reveal to you how the word or phrase applies to your life. Ask, "What meaning does this have for me here and now? What does God want me to know or to see?" Spend time in silence, reflecting on the phrase and allowing it to interact with your life. Now read the passage again.
- **Respond** to God. Open your heart to God and openly and honestly share how you feel about your experience with the passage. These may be questions or doubts, or prayers of thanksgiving, petition, confession, lament, or praise.
- **Rest** in God's presence. Allow your prayers to gently fade away. Let go of your thoughts and move into a time of simply resting in God's presence. Open your mind, heart and soul to the fullness of God's love and peace. Rest.