

Reading Schedule for January 8-14, 2018

I hope that you are experiencing the Gospel of John in a way that uplifts your life and draws you closer to the Lord. We are only one week into the New Year, so I want to encourage you to begin the daily practice of reading God's Word and contemplating what God is saying to you through it. The Gospel of John is a marvelous beginning point for reading through God's Word and applying it to your life. May 2018 be an exceptional year of being nourished by God's Word.

January 8 – John 5:16-30: “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” (v.24) This is such a clear message about becoming a new creation. Once we were dead in our sins; now we are made alive in Christ. There are two words in the Gospel of John that are used very often – believes and life. Eternal life begins now, and it is from God. As the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, we are now a new creation in Christ. The next verse is equally as inspiring because it says when we die we will hear the voice of the Son of God and be with him forever. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 it says the dead in Christ will rise to meet the Lord in the air in the second coming. In John 14:6 it says that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. I would say the last one is the most important one. I encourage you to thank God for the new life he has given you. What else do you notice in this reading today that inspires you?

January 9 – John 5:31-47: “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.” (v.36) Yesterday's reading affirmed the fact that Jesus only desires to do what the Father is already doing. This affirms that the Son of God was given a purpose by the Father who sent him. We know that his mission was to give his life as a sacrifice for many. But there is an interesting principle in yesterday and today's reading that has influenced by life greatly. There is a book called Experiencing God that affirms this principle of being in step with the Father. God is always at work, and if you notice what he is doing and cooperate with it, you will be fruitful. The reason is that God has given you a purpose, and he has prepared good works before you so that you could accomplish what he has destined you to do. (Ephesians 2:10) Isn't that thrilling? Do you notice how often Jesus addresses God as Father? I think if you meditate on these scriptures the Lord will speak to you and enhance your relationship with the Father God.

January 10 – John 6:1-15: “After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’” (v.14) There is a principle behind this verse as we read a familiar story about Jesus feeding the 5,000. Jesus showed that he was the Son of God before he even told them that he was sent from the Father. In the Gospel accounts, we will have Jesus doing many things for the good of people. He will perform miracles, befriend a Samaritan woman, and gather disciples around him in close fellowship and friendship. As he does the work of the Lord, he has shown that he has truth they need to know. Jesus lived a life of “show and tell,” and I want you to as well. As you are concerned for others and meet the needs around you, that is giving your life away. People will see Jesus in you. They will want to know more and you will have the privilege of telling them about the life-giving truth found in Jesus Christ. You will earn the right to be heard. How are you implementing a show and tell approach to your spiritual life?

January 11 – John 6:16-40: “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’” (v.35) This is the beginning of many statements like this from Jesus. He will say “I AM” and then add to

the meaning of who he is. He had just fed 5,000 people bread, and so now he points to something deeper and more meaningful – that he is offering bread that gives life. He suggested this similar truth about living water to the woman at the well. The message again from John is to believe in Jesus and you will never be hungry and you will never thirst. To say “I am the bread of life” is to point to the great I AM. Jesus will do this frequently throughout the Gospel of John. This is one of the unique characteristics of John's writing, and one of the most inspiring aspects of his Gospel because it reveals the identity of Jesus. We will read more about this theme tomorrow. But how do you respond to Jesus being the true bread from heaven? What inspires you about this reading today?

January 12 – John 6:41-71: “On hearing it, many of his disciples said, ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’” (v.60) It has been challenging for me over the years to have people leave the church or avoid me because I am pastor. But if people hear the words of Christ and they leave, should I expect anything less? This is the verse that caught my attention as Jesus is talking about his flesh being real food and his blood being real drink. People would not accept such challenging teaching. But of course, Jesus was not talking about real blood or cannibalism. He was saying that his life had to become their own, but they could not accept this concept. We symbolize these truths in the communion meal, which makes it very meaningful. Next time you participate in communion, think about taking in Jesus spiritually as you do. How do you respond to the reading today?

January 13 – John 7:1-31: “But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.” (v.27) The main message of this reading today is on the various reactions people have towards Jesus. They called him a good man (7:12), a deceiver (7:12), demon possessed (7:20), the Christ (7:26), and the prophet (7:40). Many thought the Messiah would just simply appear. But Micah 5:2 tells us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. It says that even his own brothers did not believe in him. It is helpful for me to read these chapters about Jesus, because they clearly say that many people were confused about Jesus and even opposed him. Again, I want to realize that because it may happen in my life, just as it did in Jesus' life. I do not want to succumb to discouragement. If Jesus was opposed, I will be too. Does that make sense? How do you respond to these various reactions from the people in Jesus' day? Do you see the same still today?

January 14 – John 7:32-52: “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” (v.39) In John 3 we heard about the Holy Spirit moving into a believers life so that they are reborn from above. In verse 38 he says clearly, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” We will enjoy reading about Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit in chapters 14-16. The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus' followers and was given to all who believe. The phrase, “flow within” can be translated “bubbling over.” The Gospel of John is about believing in new life, but also about the work of the Holy Spirit. You cannot live a Christian life without the help of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to yield to his power and direction in your life. Does that make sense? How has God used the readings this week to nourish your soul?

Prayers: Pray for the New Harvest family, that we would be connected deeply through the love of God, even though there is much diversity and generational differences.