

Icebreaker:

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as someone to follow. Whom do you still admire or follow today that was a hero to you as a child?

Read this week's scripture and discuss:

1. Jesus says that testimony from other witnesses (including John the Baptist and God the Father) tells others about him. What witnesses or testimony convinced you to believe in Jesus or to follow Jesus?
2. Jesus says that some people think they find eternal life in studying the scriptures (verse 39). Why is that flawed thinking? What is the real way to have life?
3. Have you seen anyone put their love of the Scriptures before their love for Christ? Have you ever been guilty of this?
4. In consideration of verse 39: In Reformed tradition we speak of "the written Word" and "the living Word." Is this distinction helpful, and if so, how?
5. In Hebrew/Jewish culture, what did a name signify? For instance: Peter means "rock" and Joshua means "to save." In Western cultures, what does a name signify? What does it mean to act "in Jesus' name"? (see verse 43)
6. Following Jesus should not be just head knowledge but also in your heart. How can we use Scripture to cultivate the love of God in our hearts? What ministries or spiritual practices or steps have you utilized to have Jesus both in your head and your heart?
7. Prayer is one way to move our understanding of God from our heads to our hearts. Theologian Andre Louf describes prayer as:
the word of God that has become wholly our own and in that way has been inscribed deep in our body and our psyche, and now can become our response to the love of the Father.
Have you ever prayed like this? How would you go about growing a prayer life like this?

prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Theresa Beardsley, Adrienne Bough, Randy Laffoon, and Joe Mundil.

In John 2, we saw Jesus get angry and overturn the tables in the Temple Courts. At the end of John 5, we see Jesus take on the religious leaders and talk tough. Jesus lets them know, and lets us know, that he means business. He says eternal life is not where they are looking; eternal life comes through him. As Christians today, we are to believe the Scriptures are the written Word of God and they point to the Living Word of God. Through the Scriptures, we can know God in our heads, and we also need him to dwell in our hearts. Study and discuss John 5 and ask God to soften your hearts to Jesus.

1. There are at least 3 witnesses for Jesus in this passage: John the Baptist, the works the Father has asked of Jesus and that he has completed, and God the Father himself. Also he adds that Moses points to him in the Law (and the Prophets). Who has pointed you to Jesus? Was someone a specific witness to you and convinced you of God's love for you?
2. The Bible (in this case the books of the Old Testament) are God's written Word to his people. They do not give salvation. But they do point to salvation through faith in God. The Old Testament points to Jesus and the New Testament tells us all about Jesus so that we may believe in him and have life in his name (John 20:31).
3. It is good to study the Bible and to know it. But the Bible's job is to help us to know God more and to point us to Jesus, who John tells us is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). We must love Jesus with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. We can love the Bible, but not more than Jesus.
4. Our Reformed tradition (which comes from the Protestant Reformation) puts a high value on scripture as the primary way that we understand God. The Bible is the written Word of God. And Jesus is the Living Word of God (John 1:1, 1:14). They work together to reveal who God is, how we can know God, and how we can love and serve Jesus.
5. Names were very important in biblical Jewish culture. Names often gave a role to someone or what their parents thought their role was. The name Jesus is the Greek version of Yeshua or Joshua, which can mean rescuer or the one who saves. Jesus is our literal Savior. Names in western culture often give honor to a family name. Sometimes they are simply names that sound nice. To act in Jesus' name means to represent him, to be his ambassador, to act on his behalf.
6. We can believe about Jesus in our heads (intellectually) without that belief making a difference in our hearts (passion, love, emotion). It needs to be both. Use prayer and quiet and ask God to move in your heart. Use the Psalms to pray passionately. Use the gospels to guide you to reflect on who Jesus is – his character and how he lives. Interact with people and see them the way Jesus did (Matthew 25:31-46). By caring for others, our hearts are softened so that we can follow Jesus and live like him.
7. Louf means to study scripture, meditate on it, in such a way that it becomes part of you. Use scripture in your prayers to guide you so that you can pray, feel and act as Jesus did, as much as you are able. Read a short passage, stop...and meditate on it. Then ask God to help you to understand it and to live it. Ask God: What are you saying in this passage? And what should my response be?