

The Gospel of John (3:22-36)

A House Church Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Desire of Ages (DA)*, p. 178-182
- "For a time the Baptist's influence over the nation had been greater than that of its rulers, priests, or princes. If he had announced himself as the Messiah, and raised a revolt against Rome, priests and people would have flocked to his standard. **Every consideration that appeals to the ambition of the world's conquerors Satan had stood ready to urge upon John the Baptist.** But with the evidence before him of his power, he had steadfastly refused the splendid bribe. The attention which was fixed upon him he had directed to Another" (DA 178).
- "**Now he saw the tide of popularity turning away from himself to the Saviour. Day by day the crowds about him lessened.** When Jesus came from Jerusalem to the region about Jordan, the people flocked to hear Him. The number of His disciples increased daily. Many came for baptism, and while Christ Himself did not baptize, He sanctioned the administration of the ordinance by His disciples. Thus He set His seal upon the mission of His forerunner. **But the disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus. They stood ready to criticize His work, and it was not long before they found occasion.** A question arose between them and the Jews as to whether baptism availed to cleanse the soul from sin; **they maintained that the baptism of Jesus differed essentially from that of John. Soon they were in dispute with Christ's disciples in regard to the form of words proper to use at baptism, and finally as to the right of the latter to baptize at all**" (DA 178).
- Vs 26: "Through these words, Satan brought temptation upon John. **Though John's mission seemed about to close, it was still possible for him to hinder the work of Christ. If he had sympathized with himself, and expressed grief or disappointment at being superseded, he would have sown the seeds of dissension, would have**

encouraged envy and jealousy, and would seriously have impeded the progress of the gospel” (DA 179).

- **“John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy.** He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way” (DA 179).
- Vs 27-29: **“John represented himself as the friend who acted as a messenger between the betrothed parties, preparing the way for the marriage. When the bridegroom had received his bride, the mission of the friend was fulfilled. He rejoiced in the happiness of those whose union he had promoted.** So John had been called to direct the people to Jesus, and it was his joy to witness the success of the Saviour's work” (DA 179).
- **“Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation.** He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. **Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life”** (DA 179).
- **“Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. No rivalry will mar the precious cause of the gospel.** They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29. They will lift up Jesus, and with Him humanity will be lifted up” (DA 179).
- “The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the divine.... So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. **We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure”** (DA 181).
- “The success of Christ's work, which the Baptist had received with such joy, was reported also to the authorities at Jerusalem. The priests and rabbis had been jealous of John's influence as they saw the people leaving the synagogues and flocking to the wilderness; but here was One who had still greater power to attract the multitudes.... They arose with a new determination to put an end to the work that was drawing the people away from them. Jesus knew that they would spare no effort to create a division between His own disciples and those of John. He knew that the storm was gathering which would sweep away one of the greatest prophets ever given to the world. **Wishing to avoid all occasion for misunderstanding or dissension, He quietly ceased His labors, and withdrew to Galilee. We also, while loyal to truth, should try to avoid all that may lead to discord and misapprehension. For whenever these arise, they result in the loss of souls.** Whenever circumstances occur that threaten to cause division, we should follow the example of Jesus and of John the Baptist” (DA 181).
- “John had been called to lead out as a reformer. Because of this, his disciples were in danger of fixing their attention upon him, feeling that the success of the work depended upon his labors, and losing sight of the fact that he was only an instrument through which God had wrought. But the work of John was not sufficient to lay the foundation of the Christian church. When he had fulfilled his mission, another work was to be done, which his testimony could not accomplish. His disciples did not understand this. When they saw Christ coming in to take the work, they were jealous and dissatisfied. **The same dangers still exist. God calls a man to do a certain work; and when he has carried it as far as he is qualified to take it, the Lord brings in others, to carry it still farther. But, like John's disciples, many feel that the success of the work depends on the first laborer. Attention is fixed upon the human instead of the divine,**

jealousy comes in, and the work of God is marred. The one thus unduly honored is tempted to cherish self-confidence. He does not realize his dependence on God. The people are taught to rely on man for guidance, and thus they fall into error, and are led away from God” (DA 182).

- Vs 36: What are the two options given to us in this verse? Belief or unbelief. There is no middle ground. To try and ride the fence, to make no decision, is to reject Jesus.
- *Read John 3:22-36. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - What are ways in which Satan often creates arguments among Christians?
 - What do you think was at the heart of the argument between John and Jesus’s disciples?
 - What answer do you think John’s disciples wanted to hear from him (vs 26)? What do you think would have happened if John sympathised with them? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Verse 27 is a bold and radical statement. How do you see this actually working in everyday life?
 - What is impressive about John’s attitude concerning Jesus’ rising popularity?
 - Have you ever witnessed Christians who are jealous of the work that God is doing through others? Is it hard to see God working through other people, and seemingly not through you? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - What do you think gave John the Baptist the ability to respond so selflessly?
 - Explain what you understand by John’s metaphor of an Eastern wedding in vs 29?
 - Why is it sometimes hard for people to give God the credit for their popularity, influence, or wealth?
 - Think of examples in which you have seen comparison and competition in the Christian church? Why is that so harmful?
 - Vs 36 says that “Whoever believes in the Son, **HAS** eternal life”? In what way can we experience eternal life NOW by believing in Jesus?
 - Is there an invitation, promise, command, or a warning in this passage for us to note? Elaborate.
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - John knew the purpose of his ministry. He was to prepare the way for Christ. Do you know the purpose of your life? If so, share it in a few sentences. Try to be specific.
 - How does vs 27 apply to you personally? Have you ever wanted what God has given to someone else?
 - What are some ways that you can stay focused on what God has given to you?
 - What needs to change in your life, for you to really say that you are decreasing and Jesus is increasing?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I commit to celebrating and appreciating the talents and gifts that God has given me, and not jealously desiring what others have.”

6. Share (Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer