

Small Group Questions | September 23rd, 2018

Explore God – Is there a God?

Passages Referenced: John 1:1–4; Lev 1:1

Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:

Hello and thank you for being part of small group ministry at the Chapel. By now, almost everyone has had at least one Explore God discussion group under their belts. Those of you with a predominance of unchurched, including some who may be firmly opposed to a biblical worldview, are experiencing the challenges of what is truly cross-cultural communication. You are declaring the message that has reordered your entire life around Jesus as Lord to people who order their lives around something they believe more reasonable or palatable to their liking. We won't have every answer they are looking for or even every answer that we would like to have. Even so, please remember that the gospel has a power of its own (Rom 1:16) in partnership with the Holy Spirit who opens eyes, softens hearts, and makes us able to receive the "way, the truth, and the life." Ours is to announce the good news and put it on display with our lives. The rest is in His hands.

This week, I've put some answers to questions at the bottom of this document that I hope will be uncovered in your groups. By putting them at the bottom, everyone can grapple with the text unhindered by my comments. The numbers with words in bold text at the bottom correspond to the numbers of the questions.

If you have questions about the approach to take in your Explore God discussion group, please refer back to last week's questions for suggestions that depend on the make-up of your group.

Here are links to each of the videos:

- Introductory 2.5 minute video – <https://m.youtube.com/watch?t=0s&v=FGs0Fq9dfW8&index=2&list=WL>
- Main 9.5 minute video – <https://m.youtube.com/watch?t=0s&v=vf86vINDnAs&index=3&list=WL>

Sermon Recap: In Jesus the unseen has been unveiled: the unseen Mover has moved into the neighborhood, the unseen Organizer has come to walk among His organisms, the unseen Artist has painted Himself into the picture, the unseen moral "Obliger" has come to live out the moral obligations of a Holy God, so that by faith in His work on our behalf He becomes the Guarantor behind the guarantee of eternal life to all who believe. The Big Idea to take away is "The evidence of reality and morality points to something Unseen behind all we see, and John 1:14 proclaims, in Jesus the Unseen is unveiled."

Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation

1. Please show the 2.5 minute video found on the link above.

Look: (Please read this to your group.) Chapter 1 of John's gospel is one of the most theologically packed chapters in the Bible. Like Sunday's sermon, our treatment of John 1:9–18 will focus on a key theme: The unseen invisible God revealed Himself in the visible person of Jesus of Nazareth. Once again, we want to look for characters mentioned in the passage, repeated words/themes, and how they fit together. We will also note continuity with verses 1–8 that we focused on last week to help us understand the focus passage.

Read the central sermon passage—John 1:9–18 before the Facilitator shares the following clarification on word meanings and background.

Helpful background info for the members of the group to go over point by point.

- In John's Gospel, the word "world" is used in three different ways. It's important to recognize which meaning John intends.
 - The created world
 - The inhabitants of the world
 - A system of values or spiritual forces influenced by Satan that are in opposition to God
- The word translated "dwelt" in vs. 14 literally is a verbal form of the noun "tabernacle"; literally "The word *tabernacled* among us." John's original readers would have recognized this as a reference back to the portable tent where the presence and glory of God were manifest.
- In vs. 15 when John spoke of "He who comes" after me, John's Jewish readers would have made a connection with passages from the Old Testament where the promised Messiah was often referred to as "the One to come."
- We need to note that "Christ" is not Jesus' last name. He was not born to Joseph and Mary Christ. Rather, "Christ" is a translation of the Hebrew "Messiah" which means, "anointed one/king."

Answer the following textual questions. (After working through the passage, some suggested answers can be found at the bottom of this document after the prayer.)

1. What words or terms do we find repeated in the passage? It may be helpful to see words repeated from previous verses as well.
2. What names or terms refer to Jesus in this passage?
3. Review the 3 different uses of "world" above. What 3 truths about Jesus' relationship to the world are found in vs. 10 and which definition of "world" corresponds to each truth?
4. In vs. 11, to whom does "His own" refer when it says, "He came to His own and his own people did not receive him."
5. According to vs. 12, who whom did Jesus give the right to become children of God?
6. How is the birth of those children of God described in vs. 13? ... What does each mean?
7. In vs. 14, what is the significance of "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
8. Considering the background information above, how would the Jewish readers have understood, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me ... Jesus Christ" (vss. 15 & 17)
9. How does vs. 18 answer the question, "Is there a God?"

Arguments from Reason for the existence of God

- Reality ... Existence ... Complexity ... Beauty
- Morality ... Human Rights

You may want to see if members have thoughts or questions on those points?

Tim Keller's book, *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World*, that was referenced in the sermon is a good resource for conversations to help contemporary skeptics consider the credibility of the Christian message.

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

- One quote that I found of special interest was Darwin's quote about how "absurd" it would be to think that natural selection could result in something as complex as the human eyeball.

From our study of the passage we see the basis for the truths communicated in the sermon.

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

Practical Applications:

1. Has seeing Jesus as the revelation of God changed your previous conception of God? ... How?
2. Have you received Jesus and believed in Him to become God's child as promised in vs. 12 and described in vs. 13?
3. If the Church is the Body of Christ, how are we doing in terms of making the unseen God recognizable in the world? ... Can you think of any personal adjustments that need to be made in your life to make the God you believe in more believable to others?
4. How have God's word and Spirit spoken to you through this message? Is there someone who would benefit from you sharing what God is teaching you? Will you pray for God to give you an open door to share with them?

Prayer/Verse: "Lord, without Jesus and the work of your Spirit, we would never have recognized you ... never become your children ... never received eternal life. Thank you for revealing yourself to us. Thank you for painting yourself into the picture of our broken world to redeem it and us. Please reveal yourself through our lives and witness together so that others will know you are God."

What we hope members glean from the passage.

1. Repeated words/concepts ...
 - a. **Light** – Note that although it only occurs here in vs. 9, it was repeated five times in verses 4–8
 - b. **World**
 - c. **Word** – Only once here in vs. 14, but referring back to vs. 1 where it was found 3 times.
 - d. **His own**
 - e. **Receive Him/His fullness**
 - f. **Glory**
 - g. **Truth**
2. **The Word ... The Light ... only begotten God ... Christ**
3. **Jesus was in the world (the created world) ... Jesus took part in creating the world (the created world) ... The world (the inhabitants of the world) did not recognize Him.**
4. **The Jewish people**
5. **All who did receive Him and believe on His name.**
6. **Not of blood ... not of the will of the flesh ... not of the will of human beings ... but born of God. A spiritual birth as contrasted to human bloodlines ... human relationships ... human will.**
7. **This is the crux of the passage and of the sermon. In Jesus, the unseen has been unveiled: the unseen Mover has moved into the neighborhood, the unseen Organizer has come to walk among His organisms, the unseen Artist has painted Himself into the picture, the unseen moral Obliger has come to live out the moral obligations of a Holy God, so that by faith in His work on our behalf He becomes the Guarantor behind the guarantee of eternal life to all who believe.**
8. **That Jesus is the Messiah King God had promised to send throughout the Old Testament.**
9. **Vs. 18 not only tells us that Jesus has revealed the unseen God. It also tells us that Jesus Himself is God.**