

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 14, 2021. "I Believe: There is a power greater than me. God."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're well into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We have also opened our children's and youth area also. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

Okay, I just want to begin by apologizing for the denseness and the ridiculous amount of information in last week's message. I know it was overwhelming and so much to take in. In just a small way, I hope it built some level of understanding of what beliefs are, why we have this inner drive to know and understand. And that it's perfectly okay to pursue all of those questions that surface within us to ask questions and to learn more. We were created, a divine design, to be curious and to want to know. And in this curiosity we will seek truth, and even more importantly we will seek God. Which is the ultimate goal in our pursuit of understanding and knowledge.

So, just find comfort in knowing it's okay to ask ANY question about ANYTHING. God is not offended about our curiosity, and designed us to do this. And in a community of faith, a church, we can journey with others who are doing the same thing. We LOVE your questions and desire to know.

III Sunday.

Sunday we pursued the first foundational truth after understanding the desire to believe. And that is the inner drive, desire, to believe in something greater than ourselves. The 12 Step program keeps it generic for people who aren't quite ready to believe in God yet, simply encouraging people to claim a 'higher power'. But in the world of faith we recognize this greater power as God. We asked several questions before we hit our scripture. Mull these questions over before we read the scripture.

"When I say I believe in God, what kind of God do I believe in?"

"When we talk about God, how do we talk about God?"

"Why a God?"

These questions are important, because we tend to live in a world where we have some loosely connected beliefs and understandings about God. But we haven't actually developed a personal theology, (how we understand God), to give our beliefs about God any real test to see if they align with scripture. So, that's what we will attempt to do now.

The scripture was divided into two parts, so we'll have you read the second part first, ask a few questions, and then read the first part. Read **John 8:12-21**.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did Jesus seem to claim about understanding who God is?

There were two points we highlighted from this passage that give us a great insight and something we can hold onto in seeking God. There seems to be within us this desire to pursue what Jesus called, and referred to himself as "light". Light being defined as a desire for and being drawn towards kindness, compassion, goodness, and other traits we see mentioned as 'fruit of the spirit'. When we look at our society, and understand how culture can be, these traits don't seem to be built into our nature. We don't want to perpetuate an 'us' and 'them' mentality, claiming people who believe in God are more moral than people who don't. We all know great people who don't believe in any kind of god, and people who claim to believe in God who don't live it out in their life. But there seems to be inherent in people a desire for the attributes of God, (not always how they're practiced), that don't seem to be built into society.

So, how would you define "light" and what does it reveal to you about God?

The second point was that Jesus said several times, if you see him you have seen God. First, there is little doubt Jesus was an actual historical person. There's a bunch of discussion around the miracles, order of the events of his life, and more, but he was historically real. And so we have to deal with this statement from him. During the life of Jesus, and still now, is a bold statement. Back then it was considered heresy, (destructive theology), and it doesn't give much wiggle room in how we understand Jesus. There are dozens and dozens of examples in the Old Testament of a God who appears wrathful and carries out justice swiftly and often brutally. But we don't see that in the life of Jesus, and he claimed to be God.

So, in understanding how people evolve, their understanding of God evolves, and how God relates to people evolves also, then we have to look at the life of Jesus, his teachings, and actions, and realize they reveal to us just who God is.

So, a huge overarching question. From what you know about the life of Jesus, how would you describe God?

Finally read **John 8:1-11** to see an example from the life of Jesus, in how you can understand God.

What jumped out to you about this passage? What did it say to you about God?

There's not a whole lot to be said about this story. It so reveals what many of us know, have experienced and understand about God. Jesus showed what God desires in his relationship with us, and why we should want to pursue a relationship with him.

IV Challenge.

The challenge has already been issued, and is quite simple. We all already believe in God. That's the first step. **Now, how can we speak about him and live for him in a way that draws others towards him?** That is why we choose to believe and live this life. That's the real challenge.