

Dear Life Group Leaders,

You'll notice a difference in today's passage from the last few weeks where we've mainly explored narrative accounts of Jesus' ministry and his encounters with various individuals. Today's passage is theologically dense. These verses expand our understanding of God from a bare monotheism to a rich trinitarianism. So be prepared to help your group process Jesus' teaching. Jesus basically makes two points, the first in v19-29 regards who he is in essence. In v40-47, Jesus says there is good evidence to believe this.

Stay strong, take care and God bless,

Andy *(This week's Life Group Guide is brought to you by Andy Tuck, who is on the staff team of our Wimbledon venue)*

LIFE GROUP GUIDE

John 5:17-47

This Week's BIG IDEA: Is Jesus really God?

Please read John 5:17-47

1. What's the context of our verses today? Who is Jesus defending himself from and why?
2. v17, given the context of these verses why might we find Jesus' defence in v17 surprising?
[Leaders note: Because, in the light of criticism about breaking the Sabbath, rather than teaching about the Sabbath Jesus significantly raises the stakes by claiming that God is his Father.]
3. v18, what was the significance of Jesus words in v17? Why did the Pharisees take such issue with them?
[Leaders note: cf Deuteronomy 6:4.]
4. Break into smaller groups and read through v19-30 again, slowly. What do we learn about God the Father, God the Son and their relationship?
[Leaders note: A LOT! Here's a few things your group might draw out: i) v19, Jesus and the Father are inextricably intertwined in their activity. ii) v20a, the bond between the Father and the Son is love. iii) v20b, miracles are evidence of this shared nature, and greater things are to come! iv) v21, the whole power of God is invested in Jesus thoroughly and completely, even resurrection power. v) v22, the Father has gifted judgement to the Son vi) v23, equality between Father and Son means honouring them both. Whatever god people worship, if they oppose Jesus, then they do not worship God the Father. vii) v24-25, their words carry the same power. viii) v26, they share the power of life. ix) v27-29, again, the Father has gifted judgement to the Son, who will judge people based on their faith in him (cf John 6:29) x) v30, Jesus seeks the Father's pleasure.]
5. What's significant about the title Son of Man that Jesus claims for himself, in v27?
[Leaders note: The Son of Man was a mysterious figure of divine power and authority described in Daniel in Old Testament. Cf Daniel 7:13-14. This is the first time Jesus this title for himself in John's Gospel.]
6. These verses turn the tables on the Pharisees as Jesus says it's he who will judge the Pharisees, not the other way around. How might this challenge us in how we think about God?
[Leaders note: It's easy for us to judge God and what he does, whereas the opposite is true.]
7. v31-47, which three witnesses does Jesus cite in these verses? How do they witness to Jesus' identity?
[Leaders note: v32-35, John the Baptist. Jesus emphasises that John's testimony doesn't carry ultimate authority. But John the Baptist clearly and regularly pointed others towards Jesus cf John 1:36, 3:27-36. v36, Jesus' miracles and works. Alongside the 7 signs recorded for us in John's Gospel, these will also include Jesus' death and resurrection. v37-47, Scripture (referencing Moses too!). We encounter Jesus in the pages of the Bible, and it's him who gives us life. Specific passages and prophecy point us towards Jesus. But it all points us towards our need of a saviour. NB, v31 is a tricky one, isn't it? Jesus is basically saying, 'don't just take my word for it, listen to these other witnesses too'.]
8. v39, 46, how should these verses direct the way we read the Bible, particularly the Old Testament?
9. How would you use these verses in conversation with someone who said, "Jesus was only a good moral teacher" or "Jesus never claimed to be God"?