



FEATS MODULE: JOHN Preparation Exercises for Learning Session 3

Introduction

Welcome to the final lessons in the Gospel of John. Of course, we can continue learning and applying from this Gospel for the rest of our lives. And I hope we do! In fact, let's commit to being lifelong learners, always thirsting for more of God and God's ways.

These final weeks in John are designed to lead you through it one more time with a unique focus and to concentrate on two important sections in the Gospel and their application for our daily lives and ministries.

(1) Eternal Life

As you have read through the Gospel of John, you have undoubtedly noticed that John loves to weave themes through the entire book...much like threads woven through a tapestry. Last month, we looked at how he wove the themes of "seeing and believing" through the entire book. We also noticed the theme of "signs" woven throughout. I hope these exercises encourage you to look for threads like these in other books of the Bible. For example, the thread of "joy" weaves its way through the book of Philippians. This is a great way to study the Bible.

One theme John has woven through his Gospel is "life" or "eternal life." After reading the following quick Greek lesson, take a trip through John highlighting his use of the word "life" or the words "eternal life." Also flag or list the key verses that you think are most important for understanding his teaching on life or eternal life.

A quick Greek lesson

John uses the Greek word "zoe" often, and our Bibles usually translate it "life." This word means more than biological life. It alludes to the divine gift from God that includes our biological life but so much more. It is the life "from above" referred to in John 3:16, the life that is animated by God's Spirit.

Please be very careful in thinking about this distinction. "Zoe" life is not referring to a life that begins after this present life. It is referring to a life that envelopes, or encompasses, this present life with a different type or dimension of life.

Maybe it will make more sense if we learn a bit more Greek. Where our Bible uses the words "eternal life," the Greek phrase is "zoe aionios." The Greek word "aionios" is the source of our English word "eons" or sometimes translated "ages." Where it modifies "zoe," the two together are literally translated "life of the ages" or "life of the age to come." So eternal life does not refer to a life that begins after this one. It refers to a new dimension of life that envelopes, or encompasses, our present life by animating it with God's Spirit. Yes, it never ends. But it begins when we are born "again" or "from above" as referenced in John 3:16.

So...when you read "eternal life," translate it "life of the age to come" and think about a quality of life with God, in relationship with God, animated and empowered by God's Spirit, that never ends!

I hope that helps you read through John with a new perspective. As you read it, highlight “life” and “eternal life” and list the key verses for understanding these terms.

(2) Bread of Life (John 6)

Read again the account of Jesus feeding the thousands and the teaching that follows it in chapter 6. Set aside at least one hour to slowly digest (mentally) verses 25-71. Prayerfully meditate on Jesus’ teaching here. List all of the insights you gain about “bread” or “feeding” in these verses.

What observations do you make about this teaching from Jesus?

What misperceptions do the people have?

What all do you think Jesus is trying to emphasize in this passage? Or what points do you think he is trying to make?

Why do you imagine many disciples deserted Jesus after this teaching?

Imagine that you have just received a letter or email from a new believer who has just read this passage. She or he is asking for your help to understand it. Write a personal response to that new believer explaining what you think Jesus is saying here in verses 25-71.

Now answer the following application question for your life: Doing your best to understand this passage, how can you apply it to your life? What does it mean for you to live this passage out in your life today? One of the discussions this chapter leads us to is the Christian tradition of The Lord’s Supper. This gives us the opportunity to understand the Friends theology of sacrament. In preparation for this discussion, read chapter 7 from Elton Trueblood’s book, *The People Called Quakers*, and come prepared to share your insights from it.

(3) Jesus’ Prayer (John 17)

John chapter 17 records one of the most important prayers in the whole Bible. Spend at least one hour reading it slowly and meditating on Jesus’ prayer.

List Jesus’ requests to his (and our) Father in this prayer.

List Jesus’ declarative statements; the statements of fact that are not requests.

Finally, write a personal letter to Jesus expressing your response to him and to this prayer.