

# Dartmouth

## Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General

Scripture: 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:14,15

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### A Gospel for a Year

2 Corinthians 5:11-19 (NASB95)

...Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. <sup>12</sup> We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. <sup>13</sup> For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup> **For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup> and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.** <sup>16</sup> Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

**Introduction** I have wondered whether the apostle John read any of the apostle Paul's letters? Since the strong tradition indicates that John lived a long life, though ending in hard circumstances. By his death, Paul had been dead (and therefore finished writing) for at least twenty years. So it seems unlikely that John never saw any of Paul's letters. Imagine John sitting in some coffee shop with a copy of Romans, or of Philippians or of Galatians or maybe what WE call "Second Corinthians." Imagine John getting to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:14 and 15: FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONTROLS US, HAVING CONCLUDED THIS, THAT ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEREFORE ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR ALL, SO THAT THEY WHO LIVE MIGHT NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED AND ROSE AGAIN ON THEIR BEHALF. Imagine Paul sitting and thinking to himself, "Yes, Paul, you've got it. I was there when Jesus died. And yes, the old John died with Jesus on the cross. And I was there when He rose up from the grave—and yes, I have not lived for myself for a very long time. I can't wait to see Jesus again." **The Gospel changes a person's whole perspective.** Old categories of how we look at and evaluate people have changed. All things are become new.

I think we can't go wrong whenever we get back to the Gospel. By "**THE GOSPEL**" I mean that whole system of living and thinking which looks forward to heaven. You and I can LOOK forward to heaven, without hesitation, because Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead and having died for all, all who

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look to Him can look with hope and joy. My sins were already paid for before I was even born or started committing them. The Gospel is what enables us to grow old and worn out and tired and broken down, and yet be cheerful because we know this life is not all there is. The Gospel is the greatest IDEA ever given to man.

- It is greater than when President Kennedy said, “We’re going to go to the moon before 1970.”
- The Gospel is a greater idea than when Gandhi said “a coward is incapable of exhibiting love; it is the prerogative of the brave.”
- It is greater than when Albert Einstein said, “If we knew what we were doing it would not be called research, would it?”
- The Gospel is a greater idea than when George Washington said, “I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is the best policy.”

The Gospel of Jesus Christ—the Good News of Jesus Christ—is the greatest idea there is. So, how do we learn this idea? We learn it from the first four writings of what we call “the New Testament.” They are four independently written historical accounts of the doings of a man named Jesus from ancient Nazareth in ancient Judea, a remote land, on the edge of the Roman empire.

The fourth and almost certainly last written of those histories is the **21 chapter** writing which we call the Gospel of John. It has **879 verses**. It includes **15,635 words**—the second shortest “Gospel.” This Gospel is relevant for us to read for our Christian life—it has many relevant verses which give light on things we face today. It is relevant for us to meditate on as we fight the fight, engage in spiritual warfare, pray to God for our family and friends and enemies. The Gospel of John is kind of different from the other three Gospels—it has a unique feel to it. Along with Matthew, it is an eye-witness history. Liberal scholars used to scoff and say stuff like, “Ha! It could not have been written before 200 AD” until in 1947 a little piece of it (from the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter) was found in an ancient trash heap in Egypt<sup>1</sup>—and dated to around 125 AD. Oh, John wrote it all right—maybe with a letter or two of Paul’s on the desk and certainly an awareness, at least that others had already written a Gospel or two! John would have agreed with Paul when Paul wrote, ***The love of Christ controls us...*** John would have agreed in his spirit, “Yes Paul, I love Jesus and I’ve loved Him a little longer than you did.”

*There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth—it sounds like music in my ear, the sweetest name on earth—Oh! How I love Jesus, oh how I love Jesus, oh how I love Jesus, because He first loved me.*” In fact, John DID write that—it’s on

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<sup>1</sup> This is the papyrus fragment designated P<sup>52</sup>.

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the inside of Renée's and my wedding rings: 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:19 (***We love because He first loved us***).

I want to invite you to devote 2012 to reading the Gospel of John—a bunch of times. But not all at once. I want to invite you to join with me in reading it a lot, a chapter or two at a time. We need to get back to the Gospel. We ALWAYS need to get back to the Gospel. I cannot imagine you NOT benefiting personally from a concentrated read and internalization of John's Gospel. Do you think you already know it?

- Do you know how it is **different** from Matthew, Mark and Luke?
- Do you know how **women** seem to have a special place in John?
- Do you know how John's **sense of theology** is a little different than the other Gospel writers?
- Do you know the things John says that Jesus said, that quoted only by John?
- Can you think your way through what is called "**The Upper Room Discourse**" of chapters 13-16?
- Do you know Jesus' "**high, priestly prayer**" of chapter 17?
- Do you know the miracles that Jesus did which John tells us about?
- Can you feel the breeze in your mind that blew on the shore as Jesus prepared **breakfast** for his fishermen buddies AFTER He had risen from the dead?
- Do you know well the bitter-sweet prediction Jesus gave to Peter about how Peter's life would unfold?
- Have you been led yet to **memorize** some verses from the Gospel of John, just because you have come to love them so much?
- Can you quote or cite any verses from John that you might share with non-Christians if they asked you why you are a Christian?

I want to invite you to join me in a devotional project for 2012 which will take you through the Gospel of John by reading it or listening to it, at least ten times. Some of you are not big Bible readers. It isn't because you don't care—you just don't know how to begin or how to go about it. Here is a plan for you to get into the Bible all this year. It won't be about keeping score or competing with anyone else. It is about you getting deeply into the Gospel of John and seeing what God can do with that in your life?

In January you can read John 1 eight times. "Man, I'll get bored." If you think that, you haven't yet **prayed through** John 1. With each chapter you can pray about something in that chapter. You might even be led to write that prayer down for yourself.

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In February you read John 2 and 3 sixteen times. You get to choose when you're going to do it. You can check off each time on the insert in today's bulletin.

In March you read John 4 and 5 sixteen times. That's 32 chapters over the whole, long month of March. On our staff we have become introduced over that past couple of years to reading the same passage of Scripture every day for five days. It was different, but refreshing and you see things in the passage with repeated reading that you miss by just glancing at it once.

In April you read John 6 and 7 sixteen times. There is the time Jesus feeds five thousand people and the time He walks on water. And it is a story that begins to get nervous as even though He does nothing but good, some do not like Him.

In May you read John 8, 9 and 10 eight times. We will slow it up a little in May as you near the end of events in John as the Jews end up wanting to stone Jesus.

In June you read John 11 and 12 sixteen times. You learn about Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus who dies but doesn't stay dead!

In July and August you get a little bit of a break: you read John 13 sixteen times in July and John 14 sixteen times in August. Piece of cake, right? Here begins the rich "upper room discourse" when Jesus is with His disciples in the upper room—some of His most loved promises are in John 13 and 14.

In September, John 15, 16 and 17 ten times each. When the Fall gets here we will still be meditating on those promises and then dwell on His amazing prayer to the Father.

In October you read John 18 and 19 sixteen times each. October sees us in the crucifixion and resurrection. This is the center of our faith. Dwelling on the cross and the facts that John carefully records, and then the empty tomb.

In November you read John 20 and 21 sixteen times each. As Thanksgiving approaches we will be thinking about the *aftermath* of Jesus' resurrection—the events and days that John himself lived through. Shock and then joy were the main items on the menu and then that day when Jesus fixes breakfast for a few of them on the beach.

In December (up until Christmas) you read John 1 again and 1<sup>st</sup> John 1, sixteen times each. Christmas is about the arrival of the Son of God from

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heaven. It is so incredible and the most amazing thing in all the history of this planet!

All year you ask the Lord to meet you in John's Gospel. You need to have the Gospel clear in your head. You need to love the Gospel. You need to love the person about whom the news, is! I am convinced you and I will benefit from going deep into John's Gospel for the rest of our lives! It will have an effect on those around us, on our families, on the non-Christians and seeking people we interact with and are friends with.

A little bit more, like Paul said had happened to him to the Corinthians, the love of Christ will control us.

- A little bit less we will want to just live for ourselves, and more we will want to live for Him who died for us and rose on our behalf!

Do you love Him now? I think you will love Him more, giving a year to reading about Him, to internalizing the stories, the promises and the imperatives that He gives to His disciples. I'll go with you through this, and we will make frequent reference to John all year. We will load up a reading of each chapter on the church web site so those of you who listen can download them and listen to them. We will make copies of the Gospel of John available for you to carry or to give away. And this isn't just for adults—this is for kids and teenagers too.

I'm looking forward to meeting John. He was led of the Holy Spirit as an old man, to remember his early days when he walked with Jesus, saw His glory, watched Him die and discover Him alive again!