

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Self-centered living defines this world. The rationale for many is that, if this life is all there is, you should do all you can to enjoy it for yourself. Exalt yourself and try to give yourself significance. But this life is not all there is, and we are not the centers of our own little universe. It's all about Jesus Christ. When we encounter Christ and choose Him over ourselves, we truly find significance.

► **If you could be a spokesperson for any product, what would it be?**

## INTRO

The Northern Lights is a dramatic show of lights that occurs at the North Pole and can be seen from locations in the Arctic Circle, including Canada and Alaska. As beautiful as they are, the Northern Lights simply couldn't exist on their own. They depend entirely on the power of the sun. Jesus called us to be lights in this world (Matt. 5:14)—to be fascinatingly and attractively beautiful. But we must realize, if there's anything lovely about us, it's only because God's powerful love was sent hurtling to this earth, and when it collides with elements of the world, His beauty lights up through us.

## JOHN 1:26-30

Zechariah and Elizabeth didn't have any children, and their culture commonly viewed this as an expression of God's displeasure. Then one day, an angel appeared to Zechariah and told him they would have a son. Further, he would be filled with the Spirit, would turn many people back to God, and would be great in the sight of God. But as John grew up, he was different. John moved into the wilderness, lived as a hermit, and ate weird foods. The "greatness" looked very different from what his parents expected. We may be tempted to look at John and think he's an example of wasted potential, but we can clearly see that every moment of his life was spent pointing people to Jesus. We can spend our lives doing things that make sense to culture—even become "great" in the eyes of the world. But what's more important is living to be great in God's sight.

► **How does our culture determine who is important or worthy of attention?**

## JOHN 1:31-34

John says something interesting in verse 31: "I didn't know him." But John and Jesus were related and spent time together growing up. John knew Jesus, but he knew Him as a cousin and friend—not as Messiah and Lord. When John baptized Jesus, the Lord opened heaven and spoke. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, John's murky vision was made crystal clear, and he saw Jesus for who He truly was. Many of us grew up in church and were familiar with Jesus, but we didn't believe in a way that was life-transforming. That changed when God intervened, and we recognized:

**1) Who I used to be:** No one was born a Christian, but we recognized our sin and need for Jesus. **2) Who Jesus is:** Jesus became more than a historical figure, and we recognized that He is our only hope for a relationship with God. **3) Who I am now:** We now live in obedience to Jesus, pointing people to Him. For those who have had their eyes opened, God has called us to be witnesses. Sharing these points is a great outline in pointing others to Jesus.

► **What are some key moments that have shaped your understanding of Jesus?**

## JOHN 3:26-30

There may be times we're tempted to revel in our popularity or successes. But John serves as a great example of what it means to rebel against a self-focused culture. When John's followers complained that Jesus was now baptizing people that had formerly followed John, he reminded them, "I am not the Messiah." Instead, he pointed them to Jesus in terms of:

- **Identity:** Identity isn't a matter of reputation or style, but of following Christ.
- **Worth:** Our value isn't found in what others think about us, but in Jesus.
- **Applause:** When others praise us, always direct it to Christ.

We're called to be like John in many ways. Whenever people look to us, remember to point them to Jesus.

► **What are some symptoms of a life that is self-focused?**



# LIVE IT OUT

## ▶ CHRIST

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He must increase, but I must decrease. For the follower of Christ, this is a motto we live by. However, it's sometimes easier said than done because flesh doesn't often decrease without a fight.

- ▶ **What areas in your life do you need to decrease?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ **How will you pursue Jesus so He can increase in those areas?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ▶ **Write a brief prayer asking Jesus to increase in your life. Make it a point to pray this every day this week.**

## ▶ COMMUNITY

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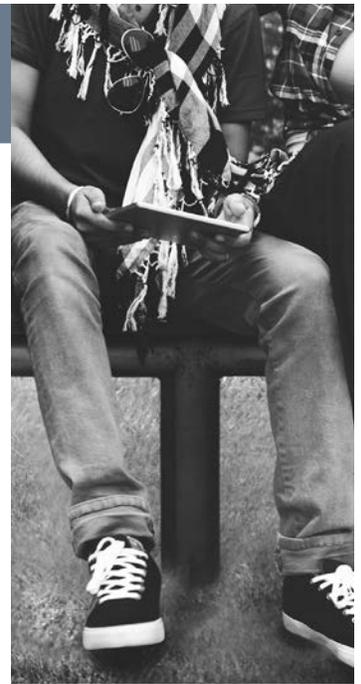
One way to see the old nature decrease in our lives is through healthy accountability. What sins do you struggle with that you need to confess to others? Make sure you confess them to your accountability partner this week.

## ▶ CULTURE

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John the Baptist, to say the least, stood out from culture. Today, when many people think of Christians, they put us in a box. We're often known to be stuffy, boring, legalistic do-gooders. But the truth is Jesus-followers come in every shape and size, color and style. God calls us to live according to the way He's shaped us to impact people for the kingdom.

- ▶ **Based on your personality, style, and gifts, in what practical ways would God have you be a blessed expression of who He has made you to be?**



## BIBLE READING PLAN



**DAY 1**  
JOHN 1:1-18

**DAY 2**  
JOHN 1:19-34

**DAY 3**  
JOHN 1:35-51

**DAY 4**  
JOHN 2:1-12

**DAY 5**  
JOHN 2:13-25

**DAY 6**  
JOHN 3:1-15

**DAY 7**  
JOHN 3:16-36