

# Adult Teaching Resources

May 15, 2016



## Close Encounters of the Jesus Kind: Conversations with Jesus (April 3-May 8)

At Home with God — John 14:23-29

Make Them One — John 17:20-26

**Someone's Coming — John 14:8-17**

Trinitarian Roots — John 16:12-15

## Getting On in Galatia: Paul's Angriest Letter (May 29-July 3)

You Did *What?* — Galatians 1:1-12

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# Someone's Coming

John 14:8-17

## FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Before the Lesson:** Make copies of the handout “In Jesus’ Name’???” for the Transformational Exercise.

### Fellowship Question

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Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

If you could have been present at only one of the miracles Jesus performed, which would it be?

What is your experience with the state of Missouri? (Lived there? Passed through? Relatives there? Etc.)

### Information

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Missouri is known as the “show me” state. Do you know why? According to the website of the Missouri Secretary of State, “The most widely known legend attributes the phrase to Missouri’s U.S. Congressman Willard Duncan Vandiver, who served in the United States House of Representatives from 1897 to 1903. While a member of the U.S. House Committee on Naval Affairs, Vandiver attended an 1899 naval banquet in Philadelphia. In a speech there, he declared, ‘I come from a state that raises corn and cotton and cockleburs and Democrats, and frothy eloquence neither convinces nor satisfies me. I am from Missouri. You have got to show me.’ Regardless of whether Vandiver coined the phrase, it is certain that his speech helped to popularize the saying. . . . However the slogan originated, it is now used to indicate the stalwart, conservative, noncredulous character of Missourians.” (<http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/history/slogan.asp>) Another site notes, “The phrase is now used to describe the character of Missourians — not gullible — conservative and unwilling to believe without adequate evidence.” (<http://www.statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/missouri/state-nickname/show-me-state>)

Maybe the disciple Philip was from Missouri.

[Have a class member read John 14:8.]

In the few chapters before Philip’s “show us” statement, Jesus raises Lazarus to life, he parades into Jerusalem, he predicts his own death and resurrection, he washes the disciples’ feet, he gives a new commandment to “love one another as I have loved you,” and he offers

## Information *continued*

assurance that “I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am you may be also.” And, Jesus insists that his teaching is not his own.

[Have a class member read John 12:44-45.]

Philip demands, “show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” Maybe he was speaking only for himself. Maybe he was speaking for many of the disciples. Either way, there was a definite impression that Jesus was connected to the Father in some deep way and that Jesus could somehow make God appear to them. “Just show me,” Philip says, as would any Missourian who was “not gullible — conservative and unwilling to believe without adequate evidence.”

Jesus responds:

[Have a class member read John 14:9-11.]

Jesus begins with a good question. “Have I been with you this long, Philip, and you still do not know me?” Apparently, Philip (and the other disciples?) were stuck in how they saw Jesus. What might be some ways they misperceived Jesus? (merely a man; a magician; a healer; a great teacher, etc.)

But Jesus says, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” There is a union of God and Jesus. If you have seen Jesus, you have seen God the Father.

Why do you think was this hard for the disciples to grasp? (they had been raised in a monotheistic religion; only crazy people claim to be God; etc.)

Would you have felt like the disciples, too? Why or why not?

Is it possible that we, too, are stuck with our filters and images of who Jesus/God is? What if Jesus were to ask you, “Have I been with you this long, [your name here], and you still do not know me?” Could this be asked of our church? Our denomination?

Jesus is incredulous. “How could you even ask such a question?” If it was hard for the disciples to grasp that Jesus is one with God, it was hard for Jesus to grasp that the disciples did not see that this was obvious. Should Jesus have cut them some slack or was he right in coming down so hard on his disciples?

Jesus says, “You can believe me because of my words or believe me because of my works.” Which is easier for us to believe?

This is not the only time in the Gospel of John that we have this sentiment:

[Have class members read John 3:1-2; John 5:15-18; John 5:36; John 15:23-24.]

So, Jesus urges people to believe in him and follow him as if they were believing in and following God. And, Jesus offers an out:

[Have a class member read John 10:24-25 and 10:31-33 and 10:37-38. These verses will be best read by one person without interruption.]

## Information *continued*

Jesus challenges, “if you can prove that the works I am doing are not from God, you are justified not to believe in me.” Jesus, however, felt that there was adequate evidence to believe in him. His words and his works were proof that he is God incarnate. Of course, even this takes faith — not a “blind faith,” but a faith that trusts the evidence. That faith leaps from “Jesus was a good man” to “Jesus was a godly man” to “Jesus was God and man.”

Now Jesus is going to say something that can be and often is distorted.

[Have a class member read John 14:12-14.]

How would you answer someone who takes this passage to mean, “God wants you to have whatever your heart desires. All you have to do is ask!”?

What do you think Jesus means by “the one who believes in me will do the works I do and will do even greater works than these?”

John Wesley took this to mean qualitatively. “So one apostle wrought miracles merely by his shadow, Acts v, 15; another by handkerchiefs carried from his body, Acts xix, 12; and all spake with various tongues. But the converting of one sinner is a greater work than all these.” [John Wesley. *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible*. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/notes.i.v.xv.html>]

Others take this phrase quantitatively. “The ‘greater works’ that they would do is understood in the sense of more works...they would move out in an ever growing circle of influence and ministry which would see thousands of people brought to faith in him, Jews and Gentiles alike.” [Ray Summers. *Behold the Lamb*. Nashville: Broadman. 1979. p. 184.]

As a chaplain and a local church minister, I wondered how I could possibly do “even greater works.” I visited hospitalized people I could not raise from illness. I left many a person’s lifeless body at a gravesite. I could not even stop a rain shower from cancelling a church picnic. Then I wondered, “what if it is a ‘greater work’ to represent God’s presence when I do not have supernatural power?” Maybe it takes as much faith and is a greater work to offer assurance of God’s care and provision when that care and provision seem questionable and you have no power to change the circumstance. Jesus healed people because he could. I can’t. Is it a “greater work” to be one who has no power, and yet to encourage faithfulness in spite of illness, or death, or random rain showers? Could simply being present be a greater work? What do you think?

[Have a class member read John 14:15-17.]

Physically, Jesus is no longer with us. What he offers, however, is to live within us through the Spirit of God. “He abides with you and will be in you.” How do we experience this? (conviction of sin; comfort in times of crisis; wisdom beyond ourselves; guidance; a sense of God’s presence, etc.)

## Transformational Exercise

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Based on Jesus' words in this passage ("pray in my name"), many of us were taught to conclude our prayers with the phrase, "in Jesus' name we pray." It is like closing words of a letter — like writing "Sincerely" or "Love" before we sign our name. For others, it is like a notary seal — it makes this prayer official. Without that phrase, the prayer is not a "legal" prayer. For some, a prayer is not a "Christian prayer" unless "in Jesus' name" is used as a concluding secret phrase that God recognizes as a "real prayer." At high school football games or city council meetings, it is used oftentimes to make Christians feel more religious and more superior to non-Christian pray-ers.

However, the phrase was meant neither to be a rote conclusion nor a magical incantation. Praying "in Jesus' name" is an attitude that means "in the Spirit of Jesus" or "in the character of Jesus" or "in a way that would honor Jesus." It means, "This/my prayer is a prayer Jesus would have prayed were he in my situation." So, the concluding words of a prayer are not as important as the prevailing attitude of the pray-er. A prayer can end with a simple, "amen" (Hebrew for "may it be so") or it may not have any particular ending. (However, in a public setting, saying "amen" or a similar phrase such as "hear our prayer" or "let it be" does help everyone know that the one praying has concluded, which prevents an awkward confusion that follows when something similar is not said.)

Look over the following situations and prayers. With a neighbor, discuss which of these are truly prayers "in Jesus' name."

A child prays that her sick grandfather will be well soon.

A pastor publicly prays for the victims of the past week's terrorist attack.

A pastor publicly prays for the perpetrators of the past week's terrorist attack.

A rabbi opens a city council meeting by praying that council members will have wisdom to make difficult decisions — but he doesn't conclude his prayer with "in Jesus' name."

A parent asks his Bible study class members to join him in prayer for his wayward child.

A person prays they will win the mega-lottery.

A person prays for more faith so that they will never be ill.

A woman prays for new neighbors who are getting a fresh start in her country.

[After time for some discussion, call the class members back together and conclude the class session with a prayer something like this: *In Jesus' name, we come to you, Father. We pray for the heart of Jesus, so we will pray with Jesus' compassion and with Jesus' sense of justice. And, when we don't know how to pray, we invite your Holy Spirit to pray through us. Forgive us for times we have used Jesus' name to intimidate others or to manipulate you. We pray that our prayers will honor your dream for this world. Amen.*]

**Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan?** You may send comments to the lesson plan author at [rjordan@cbfnc.org](mailto:rjordan@cbfnc.org). Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**A long farewell** — The theological centerpiece of the Fourth Gospel is a lengthy farewell discourse and prayer (chapters 14-17) that the author says Jesus shared with his disciples in the hours following the last supper and before they departed for Gethsemane, where he was arrested. Lectionary texts for the past two weeks have come from this section, as do the texts for today and for next week.

**The heart of the matter** — Rudolf Schnackenburg described John 14:6-7 as “the high point of Johannine theology” in *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 3 (New York: Seabury 1982), 65). Gail O’Day cites this position in her own commentary, noting “These verses announce in clear language the theological conviction that drives the Fourth Evangelist’s work, ‘No one comes to the Father except through me.’ These words express the Fourth Evangelist’s unshakable belief that the coming of Jesus, the Word made flesh, decisively altered the relationship between God and humanity” (“John,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 9 [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 743).

**A reasonable confusion** — Bill Hull suggests a reason why the disciples might still have been confused about Jesus’ claim to be one with the Father and the pathway to God: “He had claimed to be ‘the way,’ yet his path led straight to a cross; to be ‘the truth,’ yet he could convince none of the religious leaders to embrace his cause; to be ‘the life,’ yet ye would be dead in less than twenty-four hours!”

It’s no wonder that Philip asked for clearer evidence of Jesus’ oneness with the Father. (William Hull, “John,” in the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9 [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970], 334).

**Jesus in us** — When talking to children about God, it’s not uncommon for us to encourage them to “ask Jesus into your heart” or to believe that “Jesus lives in your heart.” That’s probably not the best way to communicate this truth to children, who are still literal thinkers and might imagine a tiny image of Jesus residing inside their chests. Even for adults, the metaphysical concept of Jesus dwelling in us — and us in him — is mind-boggling. Can you think of alternate ways to express the same thought?

**In the Father** — Jesus’ claim that “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” calls to mind an earlier conversation with a group of Jewish leaders, to whom he had insisted that he was doing the works of the Father, urging them to believe on the evidence of his works that “the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (10:37-38).

**The Paraclete** — In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus speaks of God’s indwelling presence as the Paraclete or “Spirit of truth” a total of five times, all in his farewell discourse. They are found in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:8-11, 12-15. For more on the Paraclete, see “The Hardest Question” for May 1.

**The world** — In the Fourth Gospel, “the world” (*kosmos*) is often used, not just as a reference to the physical world (“in the world”), but as a designation for the world’s population, in particular those who reject the message of Jesus. The natural state of people is to be part of the world, but those who trust in Jesus are called out of the world and into fellowship with him as children of God (1:10-13). God loved the world enough to send Jesus to save rather than condemn the world (3:16-18), but not all accept him. This leads to inevitable differences between those who remain in the world of opposition to Jesus, and those who follow him: “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world — therefore the world hates you” (15:18-19, compare 17:13-25).

We continue that distinction when we refer to “worldly” desires or actions that are in opposition to Jesus’ teachings.

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### What did Jesus mean in saying the disciples would do “greater works” than he had done?

On this question, the print version of the Bible study follows mainly the argument of Gail O’Day, namely that the works of Jesus were limited during his incarnation, because the full story had not yet been revealed. After the fulfillment of Jesus’ “hour” in his crucifixion, resurrection, post-Easter appearances, and ascension, the disciples would have access to the complete story and thus could proclaim the life-changing significance of Jesus’ work in a more convincing manner. “Their works thus are not greater than Jesus’ works because of anything intrinsic to the disciples themselves, but because they belong to the new eschatological age ushered in by Jesus hour. As such, they continue the glorification of God through Jesus that was the purpose of Jesus’ own works (v. 13b; cf. 5:44; 11:4; 17:4).” For more, see O’Day, “The Gospel of John,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 746-749.

William Hull takes a similar tack in his commentary on John. “Since works were intended to produce faith,” Hull wrote, “this promise was abundantly fulfilled by the early Christian mission to the Gentiles that resulted in far more believers than Jesus ever won on earth” (“John,” *The Broadman Bible Commentary* [Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970], 335).

George R. Beasley-Murray takes a broader view but arrives in essentially the same place, arguing that the “greater works” Jesus had in mind are neither miracles nor church growth through greater evangelistic success, but the actualizing of Jesus’ work to introduce the eternal kingdom of God.

“The main reality to which they point, and which makes their testimony a set of variations on a single theme, is the life eternal of the kingdom of God through Jesus its mediator. This is confirmed by the striking parallel to v. 12 in 5:20 and its following exposition: the Father shows the Son all (sc, the works) that he himself does, “and greater works than these he will show him, that you may be amazed.” The context reveals that the “greater works” that the Father is to “show” the Son, greater than those given him to do thus far, are manifestations of resurrection and judgment, but with emphasis on the former (as 5:24–26 in relation to v. 17 shows). Thus the “greater works” that the disciples are to do after Easter are the actualization of the realities to which the works of Jesus point, the bestowal of the blessings and powers of the kingdom of God upon men and women which the death and resurrection of Jesus are to let loose in the world.

After noting that the “greater works” would not be initiated until after Jesus’ departure, Beasley-Murray goes on to add:

## The Hardest Question *continued*

The contrast accordingly is not between Jesus and his disciples in their respective ministries, but between Jesus with his disciples in the limited circumstances of his earthly ministry and the risen Christ with his disciples in the post-Easter situation. Then the limitations of the Incarnation will no longer apply, redemption will have been won for the world, the kingdom of God opened for humanity, and the disciples equipped for a ministry in power to the nations. (*John*, vol. 36 of *Word Biblical Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 255.)

### **“In Jesus’ Name”???**

*Look over the following situations and prayers. With a neighbor, discuss which of these are truly prayers “in Jesus’ name.”*

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