

Week 6 Kickoff

Let people eat and visit until 7:25. (sooner if finished/restless/bored)

Introductory Comments:

Review:

- Weeks 1-4 we sought to root out some of our misconceptions of Christianity, the identity of Jesus the Christ as demonstrated by his authority over nature, sickness, death, and his ability to forgive sin—something only God can do. We looked at Christ's mission in coming to the earth—to call and to save sinners and we took an inward look into our own lives (imagining every thought, word, and deed on display for all to see) to recognize that we are sinners. Then we saw the turning point in Jesus' ministry, his recognition as Messiah, where he began focusing on the necessity of His own death.
- Last week we looked at grace. Grace being where someone receives undeserved favor. In the case with God, people receive undeserved mercy—beyond that, beyond a merely "forgiven sinners," people are adopted as cherished and jealously guarded children of the Most High!

Scaling the Language Barrier (0 min)

For the last several weeks I've taken some time to promote a biblical understanding of some important terms we use in talking about Christianity. Hopefully that has been helpful. This week I will begin a new four part series on "Exploring the Christian Life" (originally designed in the course for a weekend seminar). I will be giving them an abbreviated treatment.

Exploring the Christian Life - The Church (p. 42) (5 min)

Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) ¹

church *-noun*

1. a building for public Christian worship.
2. public worship of God or a religious service in such a building: *to attend church regularly.*
3. (*sometimes initial capital letter*) the whole body of Christian believers; Christendom.

¹ "church." *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. 10 Oct. 2008.

<Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/church>>.

The dictionary captures current use of the word, but first two are not the biblical meaning of the word. The third is.

The current culture (including the popular church) is strongly individualistic in matters of religion and ethics, but the Christian life was never intended to be a solo journey. We see the church referred to as a body with differing and mutually dependent parts, as a community called to love one another deeply, bear one another's burdens, and even to hold one another accountable with regard to truth and behavior.

Discussion I (20 min)

- Home Study (Mark 11:1-13:37)
- Mark 12:1-11 (p. 35 Q&A)
- Exploring the Christian Life – The Church Q&A ← NEW

Rico Tice Video (15 min)

Discussion II (~25 min)

Now I leave you to your table leaders.

- “Heaven is not a pipe dream, or a cruel mirage, but an amazing reality earned for us by Christ’s death, and proved by Christ’s resurrection.” Has this changed your view of heaven?
- “For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). What’s your reaction to this?
- Do you believe the resurrection is possible?

Dismissal – Remind of the importance of the home reading and study. This week it is Mark 14:1-16:8

Table Leaders-Week 6

Discussion I (20 min)

- A. Home Study (Mark 11:1-13:37; p. 33) – *Don't expect too much from participants. Move quickly through these if folks aren't prepared. See your Leader's Guide notes.*

A closer look at #3:

3. God also expects faithful and fruitful labor and due honor given to Himself (the vineyard owner).

Jesus' Authority Challenged:

^{ESV} **Mark 11:27** And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" ²⁹ Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." ³¹ And they discussed it with one another, saying, "**If we say**, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ³² **But shall we say**, 'From man?'"--they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." (emphasis added)

What do we learn about the priorities of the religious leaders here?

- *They are completely uninterested in the truth!*
- *They are only interested in what will happen if they answer in certain ways.*
- *"We do not know" = "we dare not allow ourselves to think about it"*

- B. Mark 12:1-11 – Ask the participants to turn here and *you* (or spouse or believer whom you have already asked if it is OK) read it to them. No asking participants to read. *See your Leaders Guide* – I'm only adding brief comments.

The parable of the vineyard is rich in teaching.

4. God also expects faithful and fruitful labor and due honor given to Himself (the vineyard owner).
8. Let's not soft-pedal. He will destroy them, pour out his holy wrath upon them.
9. Good references (emphasis added):

^{ESV} **Proverbs 9:10** *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

^{ESV} **Proverbs 16:6** By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and *by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil*.

10. (Context) God gives the vineyard “to others” – something we Gentiles find marvelous indeed!

C. Exploring the Christian Life – *The Church*

In the intro, Tim talked about the importance of the Church body in the life of Christians.

1. Obviously people have different sets of gifts and weaknesses. How does the body analogy help explain God’s purposes in this?

We are designed to be interdependent much like the body. The brain needs the heart and the heart needs the liver ... Those with gifts of mercy need those with gifts of discernment who need those with gifts of administration ...

2. Do you see any inherent dangers to lone-ranger-ism *with respect to truth*?

Humans have a “gift” for idolatry (creating God in our own image) – deciding to believe what expresses God as “me only better.” This is much easier when we have no one to challenge us.

3. ... *with respect to behavior*?

Humans have a “gift” for self-justification – deciding to believe that which gives us (a false) comfort. This is much easier when we have no one to challenge us.

4. How are these related?

Our beliefs and behaviors are linked (as are our emotions).

Cults take advantage of this by controlling people’s behaviors (and emotions) in such a way that their thinking eventually conforms.

Rico Tice Video (15 min)

Discussion II (25 min)

- “Heaven is not a pipe dream, or a cruel mirage, but an amazing reality earned for us by Christ’s death, and proved by Christ’s resurrection.” Has this changed your view of heaven?

Looking for people’s personal reactions here...

- “For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). What’s your reaction to this?

What is justice?

- Do you believe the resurrection is possible?

Looking for people’s personal reactions here...

... Why do you believe that?

If Jesus has demonstrated his authority over death by resurrecting others and predicted that he would do so to himself: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up ... talking about his body” (John 2), does that give solid ground for believing trust (faith)?

Going Deeper – Fairy Tale?

If they had conspired to fake Jesus’ resurrection, would they have used women as the primary witnesses to the empty tomb? In their culture, women’s testimonies were not even allowed in court.

Would those who conspired to fake the resurrection have been willing to die for a lie? People are often willing to die for what they believe to be true, but to die for something they know is a lie is unthinkable.