



WHAT
JESUS
DEMANDS
FROM THE
WORLD

based on the book by

JOHN PIPER

Bible study by **BRIAN J. TABB**

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CONTENTS

<i>About The Gospel Coalition</i>	4
<i>How to Use this Study</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	7

SESSION 1 YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN	8
---	----------

SESSION 2 LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH .	32
---	-----------

SESSION 3 LOVE YOUR ENEMIES	56
--	-----------

SESSION 4 RENDER TO CAESAR	80
---	-----------

SESSION 5 LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN	106
---	------------

SESSION 6 MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS	132
--	------------

ABOUT THE GOSPEL COALITION

The Gospel Coalition is a fellowship of evangelical churches deeply committed to renewing our faith in the gospel of Christ and to reforming our ministry practices to conform fully to the Scriptures. We have become deeply concerned about some movements within traditional evangelicalism that seem to be diminishing the church's life and leading us away from our historic beliefs and practices. On the one hand, we are troubled by the idolatry of personal consumerism and the politicization of faith; on the other hand, we are distressed by the unchallenged acceptance of theological and moral relativism. These movements have led to the easy abandonment of both biblical truth and the transformed living mandated by our historic faith. We not only hear of these influences, we see their effects. We have committed ourselves to invigorating churches with new hope and compelling joy based on the promises received by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We believe that in many evangelical churches a deep and broad consensus exists regarding the truths of the gospel. Yet we often see the celebration of our union with Christ replaced by the age-old attractions of power and affluence, or by monastic retreats into ritual, liturgy, and sacrament. What replaces the gospel will never promote a mission-hearted faith anchored in enduring truth working itself out in unashamed discipleship eager to stand the tests of kingdom-calling and sacrifice. We desire to advance along the King's highway, always aiming to provide gospel advocacy, encouragement, and education so that current and next-generation church leaders are better equipped to fuel their ministries with principles and practices that glorify the Savior and do good to those for whom He shed His life's blood.

We want to generate a unified effort among all peoples—an effort that is zealous to honor Christ and multiply His disciples, joining in a true coalition for Jesus. Such a biblically grounded and united mission is the only enduring future for the church. This reality compels us to stand with others who are stirred by the conviction that the mercy of God in Jesus Christ is our only

hope of eternal salvation. We desire to champion this gospel with clarity, compassion, courage, and joy—gladly linking hearts with fellow believers across denominational, ethnic, and class lines.

Our desire is to serve the church we love by inviting all our brothers and sisters to join us in an effort to renew the contemporary church in the ancient gospel of Christ so we truly speak and live for Him in a way that clearly communicates to our age. As pastors, we intend to do this in our churches through the ordinary means of His grace: prayer, ministry of the Word, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the fellowship of the saints. We yearn to work with all who seek the lordship of Christ over the whole of life with unabashed hope in the power of the Holy Spirit to transform individuals, communities, and cultures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study guide freely adapts and uses material from John Piper’s *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006). I write in my own style and I point readers to the relevant chapter or chapters from John’s book at the end of each session.

I would like to thank Brian Daniel from LifeWay, Collin Hansen from The Gospel Coalition, David Mathis from Desiring God, and John Piper for inviting me to write this study guide—and for their assistance in various ways to see the project through to completion. Additionally, I acknowledge the support of the leadership of Bethlehem College & Seminary and the invaluable encouragement of my wife, Kristin Tabb, who proofread the study and made many helpful comments. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

ATTEND EACH GROUP EXPERIENCE

WATCH the video teaching.

PARTICIPATE in the group discussions.

COMPLETE THE INDIVIDUAL STUDY

READ the daily lessons and complete the activity questions.

MEMORIZE each week's suggested memory verse.

BE HONEST with yourself and others about your thoughts, your questions, and your experiences as you study and apply the material.

ASK GOD to show you His truth about each command so that you can be faithful and obedient to Jesus.

OBTAIN AND READ THE BOOK

What Jesus Demands from the World by John Piper
from Crossway, 2006, ISBN 978-1-4335-2057-0

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is God-glorifying obedience to Jesus. To that end I am seeking to obey Jesus' last command: "Make disciples of all nations ... *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*" (Matt. 28:19-20). Jesus' final command was to teach all His commandments.

Actually, the final command was more precise than that. He did *not* say, "Teach them all my commandments." He said, "Teach them to *observe* all my commandments." You can teach a parrot all of Jesus' commandments. But you cannot teach a parrot to *observe* them. Parrots will not repent, and worship Jesus, and lay up treasures in heaven, and love their enemies, and go out like sheep in the midst of wolves to herald the kingdom of God.

Teaching people to parrot all that Jesus commanded is easy. Teaching them to *observe* all that Jesus commanded is *impossible*. Jesus used that word. When a rich man could not bring himself to let go of his riches and follow Him, Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. ... With man it is *impossible*, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:25-27).

Therefore, the person who sets himself to obey Jesus' final commission—for example, to teach a rich man to *observe* the command to "renounce all that he has" (Luke 14:33)—attempts the impossible. But Jesus said it was *not* impossible. "All things are possible with God." So the greatest challenge in writing this book has been to discern God's way of making impossible obedience possible.

Jesus said that this impossible goal happens through *teaching*. "Make disciples ... *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you." There is, of course, more to it than that—like the atoning death of Jesus (Mark 10:45) and the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) and prayer (Matt. 6:13). But in the end Jesus focused on teaching. I take this to mean that God has chosen to do the impossible through the teaching of all that Jesus commanded. That's what I pray this book will prove to be—a kind of teaching that God will use to bring about impossible obedience to Jesus. And all of that for the glory of God.

YOU MUST BE BORN

AGAIN

SESSION 1

Group Discussion

START

Welcome to this group discussion of *What Jesus Demands from the World*.

To facilitate introductions and to introduce the theme of *What Jesus Demands from the World*, read aloud Matthew 28:18–20 and discuss the following questions.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:18-20

How do you understand Jesus' demand to make disciples?

If explaining to friends, what would you tell them about Jesus' promise to be with us always?

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

To prepare to view the DVD segment, read aloud John 3:1–8:

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

WATCH

View session 1 on the DVD and use the following bullet points as a guide.

- Scripture doesn't just command believers to inform others of all the commandments but instead to speak, teach, and pray in such a way that people actually do what Jesus commands.
- Jesus has two categories for human beings: dead-living people and living-living people. We were all born dead and need new life in Christ.
- You can't follow Jesus' demands unless you have been born again. You'll hate His commands if you're not a child of God. You must have life.

RESPOND

Discuss the DVD segment with your group using the questions below.

What about the video clip resonated with you the most?

What does it mean to you to “speak, teach, and pray in such a way that people actually do what Jesus commands”?

What are your thoughts on the two categories given to people in this video? Take a moment to discuss this imagery in your group.

If perfect obedience in Jesus’ commands is an impossible feat, why do we strive for this kind of obedience? What should we hope to gain?

PRAY

Use this time to close your group discussion by praying for one another. Bullet points are provided to guide your prayer.

- Ask God to open up your hearts and minds to what He has to teach you in this study.
- Praise Him for sending Jesus to die in your place.
- Pray that God would teach your group the magnitude of what it means to be born again as discussed in the individual study this week.

Read the individual study for session 1 and complete the activity questions before the next group discussion.

Individual Study

This Week's Scripture Memory

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

JOHN 3:3

Books, media reports, and sermons commonly refer to “born again Christians,” but what does that phrase mean? In his best-selling autobiography *Born Again*, Charles Colson describes his powerful conversion while in prison for the Watergate scandal.¹ The Barna research group uses the label “born again” for people “who say they have made ‘a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today’ and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.”² The evangelist Billy Graham says, “Have you been born again? Call it conversion, call it commitment, call it repentance, call it being saved, but has it happened to you? Does Christ live in your heart? Do you know it? Many people have thought a long time about religion and Christianity and yet have never made a commitment. Are you committed to Jesus Christ?”³

This session will explore Jesus' demand that we must be “born again.” We will see that to be born again is more than a personal decision, more than membership in a religious group or a political voting block, and more than a Christian cliché. Fundamentally, to be born again means to receive and experience new spiritual life from God. We will consider our need for new birth (Day 1), God's work in new birth (Day 2), Jesus' related demand that we repent (Day 3), and we will see how new birth leads to coming to Jesus and true worship (Days 4–5).

DAY 1**THE NEED FOR NEW BIRTH**

John's Gospel introduces us to a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee—an expert in the Scriptures—and a ruler of the Jews. He was also a respectable and important religious leader (see John 3:1). Nicodemus saw Jesus perform signs in Jerusalem. He may have been present when Jesus drove the merchants and animals from the temple with a whip (see John 2:14–15). And so he came to Jesus by night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). Jesus’ teaching about new birth and the kingdom of God explodes Nicodemus’s human categories and exposes that this esteemed scholar is in the dark concerning the true ways of God. Nicodemus asks, “How can these things be?” Jesus challenges him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (John 3:9–10).

Read John 3:1–10. How does this passage present Nicodemus positively and negatively?

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>

What do you think surprised or confused Nicodemus about Jesus’ teaching?

Nicodemus has religious pedigree, credentials, and influence, but in this passage he has only questions. He is curious about Jesus but also misunderstands Jesus’ words. He comes to Jesus under the cover of night, but to truly understand, he needs Jesus to shine light into the darkness of his life.

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

THE DEAD CANNOT SEE

Nicodemus claims that he can see and understand something of who Jesus is from these miracles. However, Jesus insists, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). The Jewish scholar doesn’t get it: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4). A person may be born into a religious family, may receive biblical education, may be a law-abiding, moral person, and may even hold a religious job, and yet may be spiritually dead and ignorant of the true reality of God’s saving rule. Nicodemus was. The dead can’t see. That is, they can’t see God’s kingdom as supremely desirable. It looks foolish or mythical or boring. So they “cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Earlier you read how Billy Graham defined “born again.” What do you think Jesus meant when He commanded us to be “born again”?

Author D. A. Carson writes, “To a Jew with the background and convictions of Nicodemus, ‘to see the kingdom of God’ was to participate in the kingdom at the end of the age, to experience eternal, resurrection life.”⁴ Nicodemus would have also assumed that because of his Jewish piety and heritage he would surely participate in this coming kingdom. Later in the chapter John writes this:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

JOHN 3:36

How does this verse explain Jesus' teaching about seeing the kingdom?

What are some false reasons why people assume that they will participate in this coming kingdom?

THE DEAD CANNOT UNDERSTAND

We have seen that Jesus' teaching about the need to be born again baffled the great biblical scholar Nicodemus. Those who are physically living yet spiritually dead cannot "see" the kingdom of God or eternal life and also cannot "understand" spiritually revealed truths. Paul writes, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus makes the same point to His venerated night-time guest in John 3:10–12:

¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?" ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

You see, Jesus divides all people into two groups. Those born only once are born of the flesh, are spiritually dead, and do not understand and believe Jesus' teaching. Those who are "born again" by the Spirit receive Jesus' testimony about heavenly things and are alive to God to see His saving rule as true and glorious.

Nicodemus thought he knew what it took to "see" the kingdom of God. From your understanding and study thus far, what does it take to "see" the kingdom of God?

Have you experienced the new birth that Jesus describes? If yes, reflect on what new birth means to you and how your life is different now.

The person who is ignorant or unskilled needs education. The sick or injured require medical attention. The depressed or troubled may seek counseling. Sinners who are liable to God's judgment and the spiritually dead do not fundamentally need new knowledge, moral reform, or religious affiliation—they need new life. We must be born again. We need to experience the supernatural transforming work of God in our lives. That's what Jesus demands.

FURTHER READING

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 37–39 (Demand 1).

DAY 2

THE NEW BIRTH IS GOD'S WORK

In the previous lesson we considered Nicodemus's nighttime conversation with Jesus. Consider how John sets up this exchange between Nicodemus and Jesus:

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. ²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. ¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

JOHN 2:23-3:2

Nicodemus's opening words "we know" highlight his own knowledge, logic, and conventional wisdom. He thinks he gets Jesus, though it takes only one sentence from Jesus to expose Nicodemus's ignorance and need. Jesus sees right through the praise and "faith" of the crowds of signs-seekers like Nicodemus. Notice the link: Jesus "knew all *people* ... he himself knew what was in *man* ... Now there was a *man*." 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us: "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the **LORD** looks on the heart." That's exactly what Jesus does in John 3. Jesus knows all about Nicodemus's heart motives, true intentions, and secret struggles. He doesn't need endorsements and accolades or positive reviews of His products and services from Nicodemus or anyone else. No, Nicodemus—and we too—needs Jesus.

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

Read John 2:23–3:2. What did Nicodemus and the people know about Jesus? What did Jesus know about them? Record your answer in the columns below.

<i>What the people know about Jesus</i>	<i>What Jesus knows about people</i>

We are often concerned about what others may think about us. This is particularly true when we go to church. We want to look like spiritual and squeaky-clean Christians who have it together. But Jesus sees past your Sunday best and knows your heart.

How does Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus affect how you feel about your appearance?

BORN OF GOD

Jesus' demand that we be born again is challenging because dead people cannot make themselves live. Consider John 1:9–13:

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

What does it mean when John says “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man”? Who is this describing?

The word “receive” is used several times throughout John’s Gospel. What do you think it means to “receive” Jesus?

Those who are born again “receive” Jesus and “believe in his name.” These are really two ways of saying the same thing. We must look away from ourselves and ask God to do what only He can ultimately do—grant us supernatural life. True children of God receive Jesus as supremely desirable and believe that He is supremely trustworthy.

What evidence would you find in a person that believes God to be supremely desirable and supremely trustworthy?

BORN OF WATER AND SPIRIT

Another way of saying “born again” is “born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Jesus echoes God’s amazing promise recorded in Ezekiel 36:25–27:

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

You see, on our own, each one of us is unclean from our sin and unable to do what God required because we have by nature hard, stony hearts. We cannot scrub ourselves clean from our sin. No motivational speech or well-intentioned to-do list can change the reality that we are spiritually dead. Our best human efforts are like putting Band-Aids on a corpse. We need supernatural cleansing and empowerment, and that's precisely what we receive when we are "born again ... of water and the Spirit."

Put John 3:5 in your own words: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

How might you explain this truth to an unbelieving friend?

Your birth certificate tells when and where you were born and who your parents are. You didn't decide to be born in that hospital to those parents. You came into the world as a helpless, dependent child. To enter God's kingdom you must be born of God, born of water and the Spirit. And that means receiving God's Son and welcoming God's transforming work in your life.

FURTHER READING

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 37–39 (Demand 1).

DAY 3

REPENT!

The first demand Jesus makes in his public ministry is repent. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). The word “for” gives the reason for the demand. The kingdom of heaven is at hand because Jesus is the long awaited king that God promised to send (see Matt. 2:1–11). John the Baptist warned the religious leaders, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt. 3:7–8). It is remarkable that King Jesus did not come to execute the awesome judgment of God but to save His people from their sins. When He returns, He will judge the world in righteousness. But in the Gospels, Jesus mercifully and urgently commands everyone to repent of sin because of the coming judgment:

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

LUKE 11:32

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

LUKE 13:3

What is the difference between “repent” and “change”?

Does Jesus’ demand to repent seem to be severe or loving? Why?

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

“Repent” is more than “say you’re sorry,” “feel bad about what you did,” or “try to do better next time.” Jesus demands a radical transformation of our minds and hearts toward God and other people. “Repent” translates the Greek word *metanoēō*, which has two parts. *Noēō* refers to the mind and its thoughts and outlook, while *meta* suggests movement or change. So we may infer that the basic meaning of *repent* is to experience a change of the mind’s perceptions and dispositions and purposes. Such an internal transformation leads to transformed actions and behaviors. This is clear from John the Baptist’s teaching in Luke 3:8–14:

⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance . . . ¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” ¹¹ And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” ¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” ¹³ And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

Repentance isn’t the outward change but the inward change at the roots of our being that produces the fruit of good works. Jesus commands us to “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). We must experience a radical reorientation of our minds and hearts, turning from sin and toward God.

Identify some common outward changes that are often temporary and some inward changes that produce lasting fruit.

Outward Changes	Inward Changes

SIN: AN ASSAULT ON GOD

Most people in Western society think of sin as something that hurts another person, breaks the laws set by the government, or challenges a deeply held cultural value. In contrast, the Bible presents sin as fundamentally an assault on the Creator God. We see this in Jesus' famous parable of the prodigal son, who "squandered his property in reckless living" and "devoured [it] with prostitutes" (Luke 15:13, 30). Our culture might say, "Yes, the son was foolish with his money and sowed his wild oats for a time. Boys will be boys; it's good that he wised up and decided to be more responsible." But what does the son say in the parable? "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21).

How would you respond to someone who said, "It doesn't matter how I live as long as I don't hurt other people. The only true moral standard is tolerance and respect for others"?

Jesus said in Luke 5:32, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Does He mean that some people are good enough not to need repentance? Why or why not?

"Repent and believe the gospel" is a gracious and serious demand that every soul in every nation must reckon with. We have all sinned against God, whether by reveling in immorality like the prodigal son or proudly trusting in our own righteousness like the older brother. Repent. Be changed deep within. Replace all God-dishonoring, Christ-belittling perceptions and dispositions and purposes with God-treasuring, Christ-exalting ones.

FURTHER READING

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 40–43 (Demand 2).

DAY 4

REBORN TO COME TO JESUS

When we experience the new birth and genuine repentance, our attitude about Jesus changes. Apart from the supernatural work of God, Jesus looks boring, not beautiful. The average person at the office or in your neighborhood sees money, sex, health, family and friends, career, sports, vacations, recreation, retirement, and dozens of other things as more interesting, important, and attractive than Jesus and God's kingdom. But when God gives the radical change of new birth and repentance, Jesus Himself becomes our supreme treasure. The new birth means we have spiritual eyes to see Jesus as glorious, not dull. It means spiritual taste buds to experience Jesus as the all-satisfying bread of life and living water. It means new minds that receive His words as true and life-giving, not false and damaging. It means coming to Jesus and not any worldly substitute to find rest for our souls.

Judging by appearances, actions, and decisions, what does our culture tend to value most?

What competes with Jesus as your supreme treasure?

SEE THE GLORY OF JESUS

It is stunning that numerous people heard Jesus teach, saw Him confound His opponents from the Scriptures, marveled as He healed the sick and raised the dead, and yet did not believe. But those born of God responded to Jesus completely differently.

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:11-14

Some people received Jesus, others did not. Some recognized in Jesus the glory, grace, and truth of God; others ignored Jesus or wanted him dead. The Gospels don't describe Jesus' physical features, but we can assume from Isaiah 53:2 that He appeared on the surface to be an ordinary Jewish man. Jesus' glory was veiled and hidden to the masses, but the apostle John declares, "We have seen his glory." To see Jesus as the glorious, unique Son from the Father—that is, to see Jesus as He really is—we need God to grant us new spiritual life and sight.

Why don't people come to Jesus? They "refuse" to come to Jesus (John 5:40); that is, they don't want to come. Some would say that these people are exercising their free will to choose or refuse. Jesus would say that they don't come to Him because they are enslaved to sin and supremely prefer darkness to life (see John 3:19–20; 8:34).

Read John 2:11, John 12:41–45, and John 17:24. What you think it means to see Jesus' glory?

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

REST FOR OUR SOULS

Jesus did not come to establish a new religion or impose a new law but to offer Himself for our eternal enjoyment and to do whatever He had to do—including death—to remove every obstacle to this everlasting joy in Him. Consider the following invitations to come to Jesus:

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

JOHN 6:35

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

JOHN 7:37

Jesus demands that we come to Him to have our burdens lifted and our souls satisfied. As Augustine famously said, “You made us for yourself, and our hearts find no peace till they rest in you.”⁵ This is the glorious goal of the new birth, to see Jesus as He is and to come to Him and experience delight, peace, and rest.

Read Matthew 11:28–30, John 6:35, and John 7:37 again and make a list of what Jesus demands and what He promises believers in each.

<i>Demands</i>	<i>Promises</i>

Which one is the most challenging or encouraging for you personally?

Restate Matthew 10:28–30 as a prayer and write it below.

We have seen that the new birth and repentance are gifts from God, who opens the eyes of the spiritually blind to see Jesus as supremely true, beautiful, and satisfying. So come to Jesus. Behold His glory. Find rest for your soul.

FURTHER READING

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 44–47 (Demand 3).

DAY 5

REBORN TO WORSHIP

Every person worships and serves something or someone. As Jesus says, “No one can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). From the most religious to the most secular, all people value something high enough to build their lives around it. It may be God, or it may be money. But what makes it worship is the driving power of some cherished treasure that shapes our emotions, will, thoughts, and behavior. The all-important question is not whether we worship but what we worship (the true God or a counterfeit) and how we worship (with or without right knowledge of and affections for the true God). Today we will see how Jesus’ demand that we be born again directly relates to His demand that we worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

Do you agree with the claim that every person worships and serves something or someone? Why or why not?

What does “worship” look like for a person who does not attend a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque and who may even claim to be agnostic or an atheist?

WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Jesus explains to Nicodemus that to enter God’s kingdom, we must be born anew—“born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Spiritual, supernatural birth is fundamentally different than natural birth: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). This passage sheds light on what Jesus means in John 4:23–24 by the demand worship “in spirit”:

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Notice the connection. Apart from the enlivening, transformative work of God's Spirit, a person is lifeless and unresponsive to spiritual realities—there is only natural human life ("flesh"). It is no more possible for spiritually dead sinners to bring "true worship" to God than it is for a corpse to run a marathon. We need the life-giving, quickening work of the Holy Spirit to see God as supremely worthy and beautiful and to respond as we ought with genuine worship.

In John 4:20, the Samaritan woman is concerned with the right place for worship: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus responds, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him" (John 4:23). What a stunning and sweeping claim! What matters is not where you worship but whether you worship God in accordance with the truth and whether your spirit is authentically awakened and moved by that truth. It is only possible for Jesus to say what He does about the irrelevance of where we worship because of who He is: the promised Messiah (John 4:25), "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and the new "temple" where God is gloriously present with his people (John 2:19, 21).

There is debate over how to translate the last phrase in John 4:24. The ESV reads "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." But the NIV reads "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

WHAT JESUS DEMANDS

What is the difference between these interpretations? How does John 3:6 explain the relationship between the Spirit and our spirit?

Explain in your own words why someone must be born again to be able to worship the Father in spirit and truth.

WORSHIP JESUS

Those who are born of God have their eyes opened to recognize that Jesus is not merely a good moral teacher or prophet but “the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). This spiritual sight of the fullness of divine truth and glory in Jesus moves a person to believe in and worship Jesus. We see this in John 9:35–38 when the blind man who had received sight “sees” Jesus for who He is.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him.

Worship “in truth” means discarding false views of God and recognizing Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God’s character, nature, and glory. Jesus makes known to us the unseen God. As He tells Philip in John 14:9,

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” The right response to the one who is Truth incarnate is to trust and treasure Him supremely.

Make a list of activities that you or other believers you know typically associate with “worship.”

How does Jesus’ demand that we worship in spirit and truth challenge your working assumptions about what “worship” means?

We have seen that we are born again by the Spirit so that we might see the kingdom of God and then worship the King rightly, in spirit and truth. Jesus demands that every person in the world build his life around the infinite worth of God in Jesus. Consider what you are worshiping. Then ask Jesus to open your eyes to the truth of God’s supreme worth and to awaken your spirit to treasure Him above all.

FURTHER READING

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006) 99–104 (Demand 12).