

## The Metaphors of John

*These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,  
the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

*(John 20:31)*

### A. An Explanation

We're all looking for an explanation in life. We want to know what our lives are about, why we're here, what we should be doing with our lives, how we can be happy, how we can make others happy.

#### 1. Differing Views

Even though these questions are common to all people in the world, throughout history, we've come up with countless different answers to these essential questions.

#### 2. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre made an interesting statement: "A finite point has no meaning unless it has an infinite reference point." He was right. Here's how that works:

##### a. What if I asked you if green is a good color?

You'd ask "is it good for what?" It is a good color for the grass. But it would be bad if my teeth were green! And it may or may not be a good color to paint a house. So the answer depends on a larger point of reference.

##### b. If a student asked if he should read a certain book, you might ask "for what class?" What class he should take depends on what his major is. What he should major in depends on what he wants to do for a living, which in turn depends on what he values in life. And before you know it we're pondering the meaning of life which only God can explain.

#### 3. Jean-Paul Sartre made another true observation. He said that man, with his finite mind, cannot extrapolate an infinite universal. Which simply means that we, with our small minds, cannot figure out the answers to the important questions in life if God doesn't reveal them to us.

#### 4. We need an Explanation of God

##### a. The Bible claims to reveal truth about God.

##### b. The New Testament claims to contain the full explanation of God.

##### c. The Gospels are put forth as the foundation and cornerstone of the truths taught in the New Testament.

##### d. The Gospel of John, more so than the other three Gospels, has distilled the Gospel message into its core components to make it perfectly clear.

##### e. The first 18 verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of John summarize and organize those key components for us, so we have a key to understanding the Gospel message.

##### f. So, I want to talk this morning about

##### i. the key to

- ii. the core of
- iii. the foundation and cornerstone of
- iv. the fullest part of
- v. the explanation of God

Do I have your attention?

## B. The Metaphors

1. In John's introduction to his Gospel, he summarizes his message by stringing together a bunch of metaphors.
2. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison, as in "a sea of troubles" or "All the world's a stage."
3. Metaphors are useful to help us grasp new concepts that would be more difficult to grasp with literal speech, because, with a few words, you can get someone to associate attributes and emotions from and object in one context with a subject in another context.
4. The down side of using metaphors is that the hearer can confuse which attributes of the one object you intend to associate with the other object.  
**Example: "Your lips on mine are like sweet sweet wine."**
  - a. This could mean that this person really enjoys kisses from this woman, in a way that reminds him of a fine wine that he enjoys.
  - b. Or, it could mean that he finds this woman intoxicating and addicting, and he's afraid this woman will eventually ruin his life.
  - c. It all depends on the context.
5. John's metaphors are from Jesus, and the examples are many. And we can confirm our interpretations with John's Epistles and Revelation

## C. The Great Message

1. Word—The truth is from God.
2. Life—Life is from God.
3. Light—Life is transferred to us through words – Jesus' words and the words about Jesus.  
*Light*

[ READ JOHN 1:1-18 ]

*Word*

Short explanation of this metaphor: The truth is from God.

Longer explanation: Communication, in word and in deed, of truth from God about eternal life.

Also: "truth," "commandment"

**John 1:1** (\*Key Verse)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**Deuteronomy 30:11-14**

<sup>11</sup>"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

<sup>12</sup>"It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

<sup>13</sup>"Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?'

<sup>14</sup>"But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

--> **Paul**, in Romans Chapter 10, says that the word that is spoken of in this passage is Jesus.

**John 1:18** (\*Key Verse)

No one has *seen* God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has *explained* Him.

**John 3:11**

"Truly, truly, I say to you, we *speak* of what we *know* and *testify* of what we have *seen*, and you do not accept our *testimony*."

**John 3:31-32** (John the Baptist speaking)

<sup>31</sup>"He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and *speaks* of the earth He who comes from heaven is above all.

<sup>32</sup>"What He has *seen* and *heard*, of that He *testifies*; and no one receives His *testimony*."

**John 6:46**

"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."

**John 6:63**

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the *words* that I have *spoken* to you are spirit and are life."

**John 6:68**

Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have *words* of eternal life.

**John 13:34** ("Commandment" is another instance of the same concept as "word.")

"A new *commandment* I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

**John 14:21-26**

<sup>21</sup>"He who has My *commandments* and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will *disclose* Myself to him."

<sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to *disclose* Yourself to us and not to the world?"

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

<sup>24</sup>"He who does not love Me does not keep My *words*; and the *word* which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

<sup>25</sup>"These things I have *spoken* to you while abiding with you.

<sup>26</sup>"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will *teach* you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I *said* to you.

## Life

The short explanation of this metaphor: Life is from God.

The long explanation: To be in a deliberate, dependent, trusting relationship with God and His Son.

Also: "eternal life," "abide," "bread of life," "living water," and "living word,"

### John 1:4 (\* Key Verse)

In Him was *life*, and the life was the Light of men.

### Deuteronomy 30:15-20

<sup>15</sup>"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;

<sup>16</sup>in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.

<sup>17</sup>"But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,

<sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.

<sup>19</sup>"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

<sup>20</sup>by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

--> **Why is the Law equated with "life?" A law is a rule of action.**

### John 3:14-16

<sup>14</sup>"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

<sup>15</sup>so that whoever believes will in Him have *eternal life*.

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have *eternal life*.

### John 5:38-40

<sup>38</sup>"You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent.

<sup>39</sup>"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have *eternal life*; it is these that testify about Me;

<sup>40</sup>and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have *life*.

### **John 6: 33**

<sup>33</sup>"For *the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.*"

**John 8:21-24** (Here, the negative, "death," is expressed.)

<sup>21</sup>Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will *die in your sin*; where I am going, you cannot come."

<sup>22</sup>So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

<sup>23</sup>And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

<sup>24</sup>"Therefore I said to you that you will *die in your sins*; for unless you believe that I am He, you will *die in your sins.*"

### **John 10:10**

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have *life*, and have it abundantly."

**John 12:32** (He speaks of drawing all people into a relationship with Him, which *is* eternal life.)

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

### **John 12:49-50**

<sup>49</sup>"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.

<sup>50</sup>"I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

**John 17:1-3** (Here's the definition of eternal life.)

<sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

<sup>2</sup>even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

<sup>3</sup>"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

## *Light*

The short explanation of this metaphor: Life is transferred to us through words—Jesus' words and words about Jesus.

The meaning of this metaphor: The word being expressed; and the truth about eternal life can produce life if it is received.

Also: "enlighten," "glory," "realized," "explained," "seeing," "blind," and "behold"

### **John 1:4** (\* Key Verse)

In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

### **John 3:17-21**

<sup>17</sup>"For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

<sup>18</sup>"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

<sup>19</sup>"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

<sup>20</sup>"For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

<sup>21</sup>"But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

### **John 8:12**

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the *Light of life*."

4. Life is conditional.

- a. Here's an **example** where people have confused the intent of the metaphor by disregarding the context. I've heard people say that being "born again" can't have any conditions because we don't have any choice in the matter when we are born physically, and since spiritual birth is compared to physical birth, it must be the same in this aspect too. Therefore, repentance, baptism, and the like, they say, cannot be conditions of salvation. And they would even say that faith is not a condition of salvation, but the result of being saved, that salvation is a completely passive event.

But when Jesus uses the metaphor of rebirth to explain beginning our spiritual life, He makes it clear that we are involved in responding to God's love by choosing to exercise faith in Him.

- b. Life, by its nature, *must* be conditional

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3)

- c. Maintaining life (sanctification) is conditional.

i. John 15:1-13 (The Vine and the Branches)

ii. John 17:11-26 (Jesus' prayer for the sanctification of His disciples)

5. Life is transferred to us through the truth about God. **But what truth in particular?**

Answer: God's love for the world, expressed in Jesus' words and actions.

- a. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

- b. "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." (John 6:51)

- c. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

D. Conclusion

**John 20:31**

<sup>30</sup>Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

<sup>31</sup>but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.