



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

1. The Internal Relationships in the Believing Community are Governed by Love (Jn. 14-15) – Vine/Branches
 - a. Loving Jesus (Jn. 14:15)
 - b. Loved by the Father (Jn. 14:21)
 - c. A community of love (Jn. 14:23)
 - d. Loving one another as Jesus loved us (Jn. 15:12, 17)
 - e. A community of interdependence vs individuals
 - a. “[Israelite] society did not include the individual as a discrete unit. To be sure, a single person is the smallest component of any social group; & we are accustomed to thinking about people as autonomous beings, separate in important ways from their familial & social contexts. However, ... **the concept of the individual as a fully separate & independent entity was not part of the [Israelite] mindset ... They would not have understood the intense individualism of many modern societies** . Rather, people were ‘deeply embedded, or engaged,’ in their social context & ‘enmeshed in obligations of kinship.’” (Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve, Ancient Israelite Women in Context* , pp. 118-119)
 - b. “‘In the ancient world, a person was not an individual in the modern sense of the word. Individuals were first & foremost members of groups.’ To put it another way, **Israelite society was ‘an aggregate of groups rather than a collection of individuals.’**” (Carol Meyers, *Op cit* , p. 119)
 - c. “ **A person’s sense of individual agency was derived from her or his contribution to household life rather than from individual accomplishment** . Household members did not act on their own wants or desires; rather they worked with the others in their household to benefit the group & its holdings...[which] produced a collectivist, group-oriented mindset – **t he well-being of the individual was inseparable from that of the group.** ” (Carol Meyers, *Op cit* , pp. 119-120)
 - d. “Because of the intrinsic collectivism of Israelites... **individualistic elements of human existence were subordinated to group interests.** ” (Carol Meyers, *Op cit* , p. 120)
2. The External Relationship with a World of Hate (Jn. 15:18-25; 16:1-4)
 - a. “ **If the union of believers with Jesus constitutes a community of love, that community stands over against the world.** Those more sociologically inclined could doubtless offer a reasonable explanation as to why Christians, who claim to know God & who belong to a society (the church) from which others are excluded, might well excite some animus. **But the reasons listed in these verses to explain the world’s**

hatred are not sociological but theological. In this case the two categories overlap, though the latter are more fundamental: **the foundational theological differences between the community of Jesus' followers & the world not only open a window on the motives & reactions of those who can tolerate neither Jesus nor his followers, but they also generate sociological differences which are bound to multiply enmity**. This enmity was well-developed by the time John wrote, & therefore not a little scholarly ingenuity has been devoted to delineating the precise circumstances that preserved this denunciation of the world. But because John writes primarily in theological categories rather than any other, these verses are relevant in any historical situation where the church faces the fires of persecution." (D. A. Carson, *Pillar Commentary: John*, p. 412)

- b. Universal scope: 'the world' replaces 'the Jews' in the Farewell Discourse
 - a. "All too often, the interpretation of [John]...neglect[s] to discuss **the shift between the dominance of ['the Jews'] in Jn. 1-12 & of Kosmos ['the World'] in Jn. 13-17.**" (Lars Kierspel, *The Jews & the World in the 4th Gospel*, p. 124)
 - b. "The farewell discourse elevates the reader to a divine perspective which serves as a commentary [on] human events... **The point of view of the Gospel moves from...a single nation [the Jews] in the first half of the Gospel (Jn. 2-12)... to a universal perspective in the farewell discourse (Jn. 13-17)...**While the narrative...focus[es] on the actual Jewish antagonists, the... [farewell] speech presents the opposition entirely from a universal perspective... **the scope of hostility assume[s] worldwide extension ...**" (Lars Kierspel, *The Jews & the World in the 4th Gospel*, pp. 125-7)
- c. Hated: An inescapable reality for true believers
 - a. "Jesus' opening words in v. 18 present the disciples with **an inescapable reality** of their life as the community of his followers: **they will experience the world's hatred**. The inescapability of this hatred is underscored by the grammar of v. 18; the sentence is a real condition (i.e., 'if the world hates'), not an unreal condition (i.e., 'if the world were to hate you'). **Jesus does not follow this announcement with easy words of comfort, but instead exhorts the disciples to a full understanding of the sources of this hatred.**" (Gail O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: John*, p. 650)
 - b. "Jesus begins by saying, '**if the world hates you**', but '**if is not expressing uncertainty**'. Jesus doesn't say, 'In the unlikely event the world hates you.' **The sense is more 'if—& trust me they will.'** The hatred of the world is a certainty. If you're following Christ, this is a guarantee." (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: John*, p. 376)
 - c. "The world is set in sharp contrast. '**if the world hates you**' does not imply that there is any doubt about the matter. Rather the reverse. The world will certainly hate them." (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 603)
- d. The source of the world's hatred towards believers (Jn. 15:18b-20)
 - a. "Verses 18b-20 identify **one source of the world's hatred** of the community: it is an extension of the world's **hatred of Jesus**." (Gail O'Day, *Op cit*, p. 650)
 - b. "**The purpose of these verses is to eliminate the surprise factor when persecution does break out**, ...If the world hates you—and the assumption is that it will—keep in mind that it hated me first." (D. A. Carson, *Op cit*, p. 412)
 - a. The world
 - a. "The noun 'world' occurs five times in v. 19, & this heavy concentration highlights the contrast between the community & the world. Although '**world**' is sometimes used neutrally in John to name God's created order (Jn 3:16), here it **clearly is used to represent what is opposed to God's work & presence in Jesus (7:7).**" (Gail O'Day, *Op cit*, p. 650)
 - b. "**What does Jesus mean when he uses the word world?** He's not talking about the planet. He's referring to all those who live in open rebellion to the Creator...by definition, **the world hates Jesus because it stands opposed to all that God is & is doing.**" (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op cit*, p. 376)
 - c. "**The world, as commonly in John, refers to the created moral order in active rebellion against God ..**" (D. A. Carson, *Op cit*, p. 412)
 - b. Hatred
 - a. "The verb to hate is in **the perfect tense** in verse 18b; the **hatred of Jesus began in the past, but its effect continues into the present.**" (Gail O'Day, *Op cit*, p. 650)
 - b. "**It is important to note that 'hate' is never used in John to describe the community's response to the world**; it is used exclusively to describe the world's response to Jesus & his followers. If hate begins to shape the Christian community's response to the world, then it is acting in opposition to the Incarnate love of God." (Gail O'Day, *Op cit*, p. 655)
 - c. "The ultimate reason for the world's hatred of Jesus is that he testifies that its deeds are evil (7:7). **Christ's followers will be hated by the same world, partly because they are associated with the one who is supremely hated, & partly because ... they will have the same effect on the world as their Master**. They, too, will appear alien. The world loves its own: this is not a sociological remark about inborn suspicion of strangers, but a moral condemnation. The world is a society of rebels, & therefore finds it hard to tolerate those who are in joyful allegiance to the king to whom all loyalty is due." (D. A. Carson, *Op cit*, p. 412)
 - c. The source
 - a. It hates Jesus (v. 18b)

- b. The disciples are not of the world (v. 19)
 - a. *"The language of love in v. 19a is an ironic play on the love language of the Farewell Discourse (13:1), because **in order to receive the world's love instead of its hatred, the community would have to renounce its share in Jesus' love.**"* (Gail O'Day, *Op cit* , p. 651)
 - b. *"The disciples 'do not belong to the world,' for Jesus has chosen them out of it. The necessary consequence is that the world hates them. The present tense in this last verb indicates a continuing attitude."* (Leon Morris, *Op cit* , p. 603)
- c. A servant is not greater than his master (v. 20)
 - a. *"We follow Jesus. Where did Jesus go? To the cross. **You can't follow a crucified Savior & not expect a cross** . If our Master (who never sinned) died because of the world's hatred, logic alone tells us we should expect something similar, especially since we have sinned. In the face of the world's hatred, **it's helpful for us to remember the reason we're hated. It's not personal. People's hatred might be directed at us, but we're not the ultimate target. Jesus is*** (v. 20)." (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op cit* , p. 377)
 - b. *"**'If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also'** (Mt. 10:16–25; Mk. 13:9–13; Lk. 6:40). Those who preach Jesus' gospel & live in progressive conformity to his own life & teaching will attract the same antagonism that he did."* (D. A. Carson, *Op cit* , p. 413)
 - c. *"In 1937 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed at the end of the war (1945) in a German concentration camp, prophetically wrote in 'The Cost of Discipleship': '**Suffering . . . is the badge of the true Christian. The disciple is not above his master** . . . [Martin] Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true church. . . **Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ** , & it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer."* (R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word: John* , pp. 336-7)
 - d. *"William Temple, in 'Readings in John's Gospel,' states the third reason for persecution from the Christian perspective. '**The world . . . would not hate angels for being angelic; but it does hate men for being Christians** . It grudges them their new character; it is **tormented by their peace** ; it is **infuriated by their joy** .'"* (R. Kent Hughes, *Op cit* , pp. 337-8)
- d. Why does the world hate Jesus? (vv. 22-24)
 - a. He exposes unbelief (16:8)
 - a. *"**Sin, in John's Gospel, is first a relational concept. It is unbelief or alienation from God** . . . It means not comprehending the truth about God & Jesus, & not knowing the truth about oneself. It is a blindness to one's own condition. . . John does not speak of sins primarily as transgressions of a moral code. . . **Sin is depicted as opposition to God & Jesus** , & this is evident in animosity toward those who belong to Jesus (15:22-24)."* (Craig Koester, *Op cit* , pp. 65-6)
 - b. *"The seriousness of rejecting Christ is brought out. **Jesus does not mean, of course, that the Jews would have been sinless had he not appeared. But he does mean that the sin of rejecting God. . . would not have been imputed to them had they not had the revelation of God that was made through him** . But now, as things are, they have no excuse. There is no way of covering up their sin."* (Leon Morris, *Op cit* , p. 604)
 - c. *"**The idea is not that if Jesus had not come the people would have continued in sinless perfection** — as if the coming of Jesus introduced for the first time sin & its attendant guilt before God. **Rather, by coming & speaking to them Jesus incited the most central & controlling of sins** : rejection of God's gracious revelation, rebellion against God, decisive preference for darkness rather than light." (D. A. Carson, *Op cit* , p. 413)*
 - b. He holds up a mirror for us to see ourselves
 - a. *"Once an African chief, in this case a woman, happened to visit a mission station. Hanging outside the missionary's cabin, on a tree, was a little mirror. The chief happened to look into the mirror & saw her reflection, with its hideous paint & evil features. She gazed at her own terrifying countenance & jumped back in horror exclaiming, 'Who is that horrible-looking person inside that tree?' The missionary replied, 'It's not in the tree. The glass is reflecting your own face.' The chief would not believe it until she held the mirror in her hand. She said, 'I must have the glass. How much will you sell it for?' The missionary said, 'I don't want to sell it.' But she begged until he capitulated. She took the mirror & exclaimed, 'I will never have it making faces at me again,' & threw it down & broke it to pieces. **That is precisely what the Jews did with Jesus, & tragically it often happens today. We hate to see what we really are.** A good look at Jesus results in either abiding hatred or love, & people have the same reaction toward Christ's followers."* (R. Kent Hughes, *Op cit* , p. 335)

3. How Do We Respond to the World's Hatred?

- a. Our attitude
- b. Not being surprised
- c. *"The disciples are not. . . led to expect halcyon [happy, peaceful] days ahead; there will be **no cease-fire between them & the world around them** . . . **Jesus precipitated conflict between dark & light**, religious leaders & himself, superficial followers & true disciples, the hostile world & the faithful. **This scenario will not dissipate in Jesus' absence** . . ." (John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* , p. 383)*
- d. *"**Sometimes Christians act surprised by the world's behavior. Too often we expect the world to live in obedience to God.** We think a bunch of non-Christians should act like Christians. Jesus reminds us the world is estranged from God (v. 21). The world is living in open rebellion against [God]. **Whenever we're shocked by the world's behavior, it's because we've forgotten the world's condition.**"* (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op cit* , p. 378)
- e. Know that following Jesus is costly
- f. *"**Following Jesus costs something** (Lk. 9:57–62; 14:25–33), **& may cost life itself.** Yet not following Jesus means one is siding with a lost & hateful world. To warn prospective disciples of these unyielding realities serves to discourage spurious conversions & to foster true ones, just as Jesus told these things to the first disciples in order to ensure stability until the time of faith truly dawned (16:1)."* (D. A. Carson, *Op cit* , p. 412)
- g. Knowing that Jesus suffered as we are
- h. *"**Jesus fully identifies with people, especially in their suffering** . He is misunderstood, hated, & condemned; & when his followers encounter these things, **they know that Jesus has experienced them too***

(15:18, 20).” (Craig Koester, *Op cit* , p. 85)

- i. Our Response – R persecution is more subtle: disdained, despised, & criticized
- j. Inappropriate – we want to be accepted & liked
- k. Compromising God’s truth because the Gospel of Jesus is offensive (1 Cor. 1:18) – it tells us we R sinners, that we can’t save ourselves & that we need a Saviour – it’s anti-humanism – shave the sharp edges off to make it more palatable – **READ** Jn. 14:6 – less emphasis on Essentials – ppl say “*all religions R fundamentally the same, & only superficially different*” – **WRONG!** – “*all religions R at best, superficially similar, but fundamentally different.*” – READ Acts 4:12
- l. Accommodating to embrace the ever-changing values of society – Pope Francis, willing 2 bless Gay couples – trying 2 maintain UR spot at the “table”
- m. “*Jesus calls his followers to reject ‘business as usual,’ to reject the ways of the world that stand in opposition to his ways – to his revelation of the love of God in his life & from the world. Rather, **John 15:18-16:4a challenges the Christian community to be fully present in the world while at the same time not following the dictates of the world** . Because the faith community does not belong to the world, it is not governed by the world’s categories & expectations. When the church chooses to play the world’s game, by the world’s rules, the church risks losing everything, because **when the church is judged ‘successful’ according to the world’s standards, it acts as if it belongs to the world instead of like it was chosen out of the world.** ” (Gail O’Day, *Op cit* , p. 655)*
- n. Appropriate – Love R enemies & not responding in kind (hate 4 hate, etc.)
- o. “**What, then, does God expect us to do [because we are persecuted]?** To retire? To draw back? No! Resentment? Retaliation? Revenge? No! We are forbidden to return evil for evil. Then what is to be our response? **Persecution** is not an excuse for silence, but it **does challenge us to witness, to share Christ lovingly to a hostile world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.** ” (R. Kent Hughes, *Op cit* , p. 338)

4. The Paraclete (15:26-27; 14:17)

a. Testifies about Jesus

- a. “*Jesus’ third promise of the advent of the Paraclete provides an interlude between the two depictions of the hate the faith community will experience...The third promise introduces a new function of the Paraclete, **to testify about Jesus.** ” (Gail O’Day, *Op cit* , p. 652)*
- b. “*The function accorded the Paraclete in 15:26-27 is quite close to Jesus’ words about the role of the Spirit in the synoptic teachings on persecution; to speak with & for the community when it is brought before its adversaries (Matt. 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12).*” (Gail O’Day, *Op cit* , p. 653)
- c. “*The witness of the Paracletes & that of the community are not too distinct acts; rather, the community’s witness is the visible sign of the Paraclete’s work as witness.*” (Gail O’Day, *Op cit* , p. 652)
- d. “**The particular function of the Spirit that occupies us here is that of...witness to Christ** . When Jesus is taken from the earth, the Spirit will continually bear witness concerning him. The passage strengthens the conviction that the word translated ‘Counselor’ has legal significance. The Spirit, so to speak, conducts Christ’s case for him before the world.” (Leon Morris, *Op cit* , p. 606)
- e. “*The preceding verses (15:18–25) have repeatedly insisted that hatred toward Jesus’ disciples springs from hatred against Jesus himself, & that this in turn has been the world’s response to the revelation that he is & brings. **But if Jesus is going away, how will this confrontation with the world continue?** And if it does not continue, how shall hatred from the world still be related to who Jesus is, what he says & what he does? **The answer** is briefly provided in these two verses: **the Holy Spirit joins with the disciples in testifying about Jesus to the world. The world’s opposition thus continues to revolve around the question of who Jesus is.** ” (D. A. Carson, *Op cit* , p. 414)*

b. A fierce & loyal companion as believers face a hostile world

- a. “*This world cannot receive the Spirit of truth. **Jesus precipitated conflict between dark & light**, religious leaders & himself, superficial followers & true disciples, the hostile world & the faithful. **This scenario will not dissipate in Jesus’ absence**, when the Paraclete...will reside in...human[s] [who] receive Jesus (1:13-14; 14:17). **This is an essential insight that renders the Spirit in the fourth Gospel distinctive. The war between light & darkness**, ignorance & wisdom, **does not draw to a close with the advent of the Spirit** . No amount of peace, patience, kindness...[Paul’s] ‘fruit of the Spirit’ – [which] comes in the wake of the Spirit within [doesn’t eliminate this conflict with the world]...[Paul has] the ‘spirit of the world [vs.] the Spirit from God’. This last contrast lies very close...to the fourth Gospel...Yet, **the spirit of the world...in Paul...is a more benign** presence; it is simply...the world’s values. **In the fourth Gospel...the world is a hostile presence** that cannot receive or see the Spirit, & the ruler of the world...stands under condemnation (16:11). In this context, **the Spirit is** no peaceful & gentle presence that aids the war-weary, but **a fierce & loyal companion** , not unlike Jesus in the fourth Gospel... **The Spirit of truth is...no more conciliatory than** the first Paraclete [i.e., **Jesus**] whose place he takes... **The [Spirit’s] irenic [peaceful]***

function of guiding the community into truth, of interpreting the past afresh, **is directed internally only to the community**. The Spirit of truth, the Paraclete, will have **an altogether different impact upon the world by bringing it to trial** ...(14:17; 15:26; 16:8-11)." (John R. Levison, *Op cit* , pp. 383-4)

5. Jesus calls us out to sends us back

- a. "**Jesus calls people out of the world & into the faith community, then sends them back into the world** ...in order to call others to faith (17:18)." (Craig Koester, *Op cit* , p. 209)
- b. "**Jesus promises to send his Spirit to tell people about him; then he says his disciples will tell people about him** (vv. 26-27). We understand **these two promises as one promise** —the promise **his Spirit will empower his disciples to witness about him**. The Holy Spirit...will help the disciples speak the truth about Jesus. The disciples aren't left with this monumental task to accomplish on their own. **Jesus promises divine reinforcements** ." (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op cit* , p. 380)
- c. "**Jesus' promise of the Spirit is given in the face of worldly conflict**. Jesus encounters sharp opposition from others, who judge him to be a sinner, a blasphemer, & a threat to society. **At the Last Supper he tells his followers that they too will experience hostility** from those who do not share their convictions (15:18-25). Yet he also promises that the Spirit will keep disclosing the significance of what Jesus has said & done, & will expose the truth about the world's estrangement from God & Jesus. **As the disciples bear witness, the Spirit also will witness in order that others might come to believe** ." (Craig Koester, *Op cit* , pp. 151-2)
- d. "To be sure, 'everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted' (2 Tim. 3:12), but **that does not absolve Christians from their responsibility to witness to the truth they have come to know & experience** ." (Andreas Kostenberger, *Encountering Bible Study: John* , p. 171)
- e. "The presence of the Paraclete as a witness with the community provides the grounds for Jesus' exhortation to the community that they, too, must be witnesses. As 16:1-4a will make explicit, the community will endure persecution as a result of its faith. The promise of the paraclete...is offered as encouragement & a reminder that they will not be alone in their trials & that they can stand firm in what they believe." (Gail O'Day, *Op cit* , p. 652)
- f. "**The Spirit empowers the community of faith that Jesus sends into the world** ...At the Last Supper Jesus says, 'When the Advocate comes...he will bear witness concerning me; & you also continue bearing witness, because you are with me from the beginning' (15:26-27). **Witnessing means voicing one's convictions in contexts where the truth is not obvious ... [and] wherever people must testify to what they believe, despite claims to the contrary**. Jesus tells the disciples that the world will hate & persecute them. Such **opposition does not call for withdrawal but for witness, for truth-telling** ." (Craig Koester, *Op cit* , p. 157)
- g. "The Paraclete will bear witness to Jesus (15:26), & then immediately we read that the disciples who have been with Jesus from the beginning will also bear witness (15:27). It seems that **the two statements, conjoined by kai ['and], are to be taken together** : i.e., the **Paraclete bears witness through that of the disciples**, who represent all subsequent believers... In the Johannine churches...there would be a **mutual interplay between Spirit-guided teachers & the Spirit-indwelt congregation** ... [so] the whole community would be led into...the truth that is in Jesus." (John E. Morgan-Wynne, *Holy Spirit & Religious Experience* , p. 34) [Spirit's witness not independent of (separate from) the believers' witness]