

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. ²³ John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized ²⁴ (for John had not yet been put in prison). ²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. ²⁶ And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." (John 3:22-26)

1. All ministry and blessings come from God—there is no competition.

John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'" (John 3:27-28)

"If my life is fruitless, it doesn't matter who praises me, and if my life is unfruitful, it doesn't matter who criticizes me." – John Bunyan

2. Our joy becomes complete when attention on Jesus increases, and attention on us decreases.

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:29-30)

3. Because Jesus is above all and knows all truth, His words are more than just good ideas from a wise man—they are divine insights upon which we can build our lives.

He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. ³³ Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God for he gives the Spirit without measure. (John 3:31-34)

We have lots of good reasons for believing that the Bible is true¹, but the best way to know is to let Jesus speak for Himself and engage you as you read the Bible!

4. God the Father loves Jesus lavishly and has given Him authority to lovingly lead us toward forgiveness, life, and eternity with Him.

The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life... (John 3:35-36a)

Aren't Christians being narrow-minded and elitist to say that Jesus is the only way? First, Jesus is the one who said it (Jn.14:6); Christians are simply being faithful to Jesus' teachings. Second, everyone prefers narrow approaches as long as they are based on truth and point us in the direction best for our lives (e.g., a doctor narrowly limits her prescription to medicines that will help - not poison - a sick patient; an airline pilot restricts the plane's landing options to a narrow runway rather than to a busy neighborhood or Wal-Mart parking lot, etc.). Jesus gave us every reason to believe He is telling the truth about being the exclusive giver of eternal life.

5. The verdict has already been announced concerning those who stubbornly insist that they don't want Jesus, but the sentence has not yet been carried out—God is patiently waiting for them to turn to Him.

...whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36b)

"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. Those who knock it is opened." – C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

¹ Read the article "Can We Trust the Bible?" by Brett Kunkle at www.str.org, and/or listen to the broadcast "Five Reasons You Can Trust Your Bible" by J. Warner Wallace at www.coldcasechristianity.com.