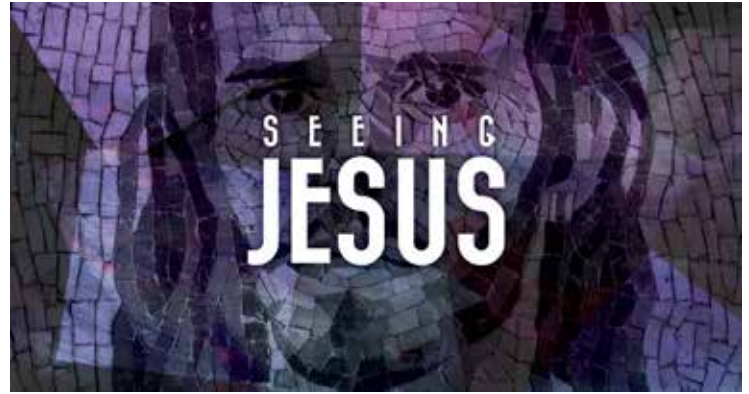


# WEEK OF APRIL 16



DAY  
1

## The Three Great Aches of the Human Heart

John 1:16-18

The first chapter of John's gospel is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature ever penned in any philosophy, religion, or text that has been put into the human story. This text is a revelation. And the three verses we will look at today contains the three great aches of the human heart.

*From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; **grace** and **truth** came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him **known**.* (John 1:16-18)

The three words that describe the great aches of the human heart are *known*, *truth*, and *grace*.

### KNOWN

Jesus came to make God known to us. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. The opening verses of the Book of Hebrews say: "He (Jesus) is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being." God knows you, and he desires for you to know him. Jesus makes God known.

### TRUTH

In verse 17 we see that Jesus is the truth, and he speaks the truth to us about who we are, our sinful condition, the evil and brokenness of our world, and his unconditional love and boundless mercy. We all ache to know the truth and live in accordance with the truth. Jesus breaks through the lies we are surrounded by and speaks God's truth into our lives.

### GRACE

The third word we cry out for is something Jesus brings in inexhaustible supply—the grace of God. Such a small word, but it might be the most powerful word for us to learn. God, because of his great love for humanity, gives us something we don't deserve and could never earn—his divine favor, which he pours into our lives through Jesus Christ. I (Aaron Kunce) am a recipient of the grace upon grace Jesus ceaselessly brings into my heart.

I invite you to see Jesus and know God today, receive his truth, and enjoy his grace forever.

DAY  
2

## Being Known

Psalms 139:1-4; John 1:14-18

Have you ever experienced the gift of a friend who truly knows you? I (Kendall Potter) am blessed to have a handful of close friends that really get me. There is one friend in particular who I don't get to see very often, but who knows me really well. She knows the good and bad of my personality and she loves me anyway. She and I have marathon phone calls, where we talk for hours about all the little things happening in our lives. I always leave those calls filled with gratitude for such a good friend.

God knows you—really knows you. And he loves you. Psalm 139 reminds us that God knows our thoughts, our actions, all of it. He knew us before we were born. He knows us still. He knows the fears and anxieties that we mask,

the ways we mess up, the motivations behind what we do. God is a personal God, and he knows us well.

Not only does he know us, but he makes himself known. Jesus humbled himself to come to earth. God came near. We don't worship a God who is far from us but one who experienced what he experienced and now dwells within us in the Holy Spirit. We haven't seen God, but Jesus lets us know what God is like. God is merciful and kind, close to us, making himself known.

We all experience seasons of life where it seems like God is far from us, but scripture reminds us that God is found whenever we seek him (Jeremiah 29:12-14).

*Do you feel like you know God? How does it feel to know that God knows you? How can you seek God today?*

DAY  
3

## Truth

### John 14:1-7

I love almost everything about *Star Wars*, but there is a line in *Return of the Jedi* that summarizes a huge cultural problem. After Luke finds out that (spoiler alert) Darth Vader is his father, he confronts his mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi about why he didn't tell him the truth. Obi-Wan's answer was this: "What I told you was true... from a certain point of view. Luke, you're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view."

This idea has become especially true when it comes to individual beliefs about religion and spirituality. Andreas Köstenberger puts it like this: "In an age of religious pluralism, Christianity's exclusive claims are considered inappropriately narrow, even intolerant, and pluralism itself has, ironically, become the criterion by which all truth claims are judged."

While this is prevalent in culture, it's not the message of scripture. We see the word *truth* show up in John's gospel 25x alone. Read through these examples:

... *grace and **truth** came through Jesus Christ.* (John 1:17)

... *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the **truth**, and the truth will set you free."* (John 8:31-32)

*Jesus answered, "I am the way, the **truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6)

This last verse is arguably one of the most important in the whole Bible. Jesus himself is the truth made flesh for all of us to encounter and know for the amazing purpose of providing access to God the Father for all those who believe. Truth is not relative, and it does not depend on our own viewpoint. Instead, Jesus has entered our circumstances, opinions, and preferences and shown us a better way. The question is, do we believe it's true?

*Take a moment a pray for God to help you better understand his truth. Ask him to put others in your life who can help grow and reinforce it.*

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4

## Grace

### Ephesians 2:8-10; Matthew 13:44-46; Romans 5:6-8

We read in Ephesians 2:8, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." There is truly nothing better than this gift, but Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly calls us to understand fully what a life of grace looks like in his masterpiece *The Cost of Discipleship*. Read the following two quotes, and as you read, ask yourself which description of grace you relate to more.

The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?... Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man

must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “you were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Read Matthew 13:44-46 and Romans 5:6-8.

*How does thinking about the cost that was paid for you to receive grace change the way you think about it? What cost are you willing to pay?*

## Personal Reflection & LifeGroup Conversation

**ONE:** Read John 1:16-18. How do these verses make you feel? What do they tell us about God?

**TWO:** Have you ever experienced a time where you did not feel like God was known to you? Has God ever felt far away? What was that like? What did you do during that time?

**THREE:** How did you come to believe that Christianity is true?

**FOUR:** Do you think of grace as “costly”? How does describing grace that way make you feel?

**FIVE:** Have you experienced a time where God felt far away? What was that like for you? How did you come out of that season? How does it make you feel to know that God has made himself known through Jesus?